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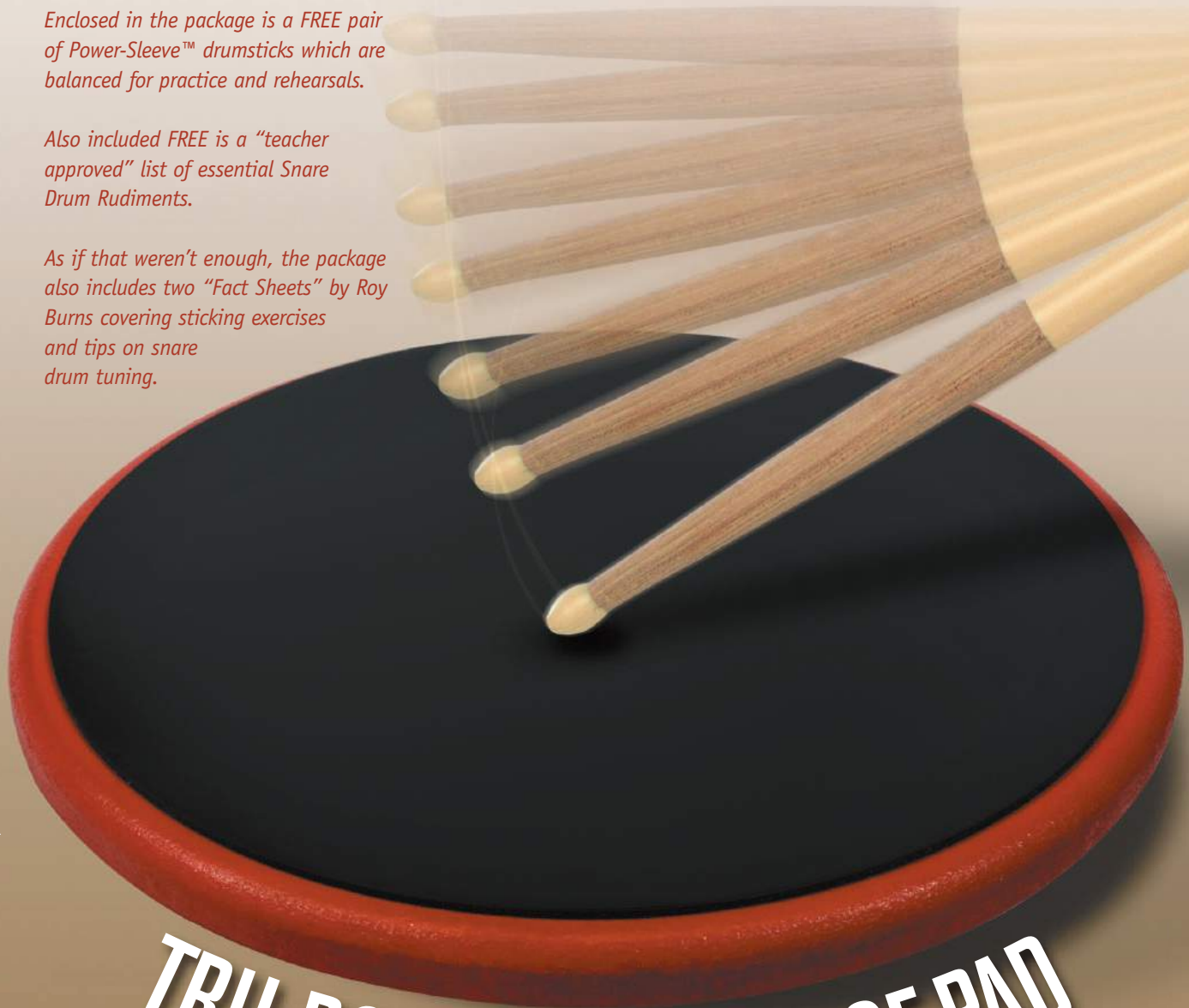

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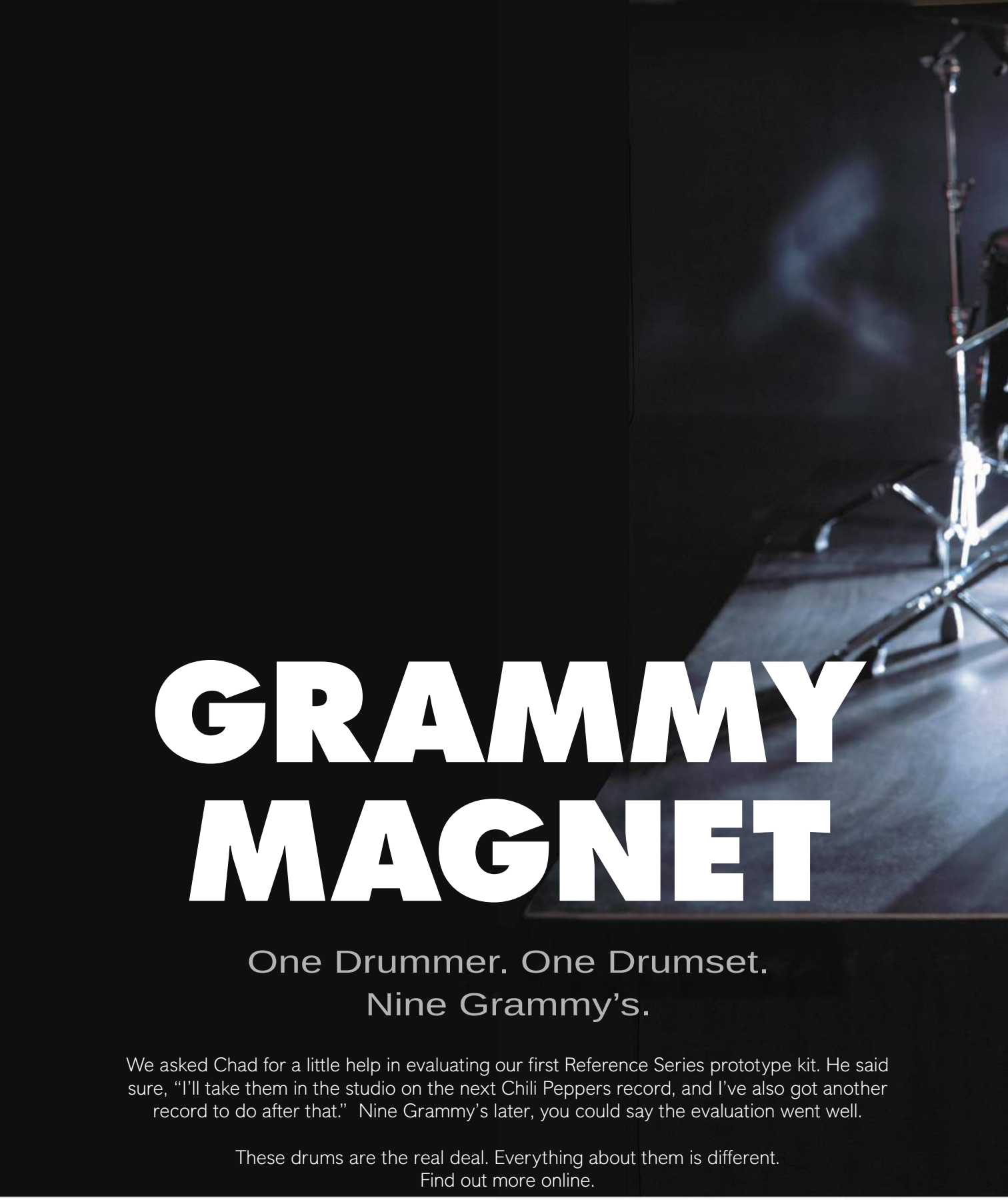

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Paul La Raia

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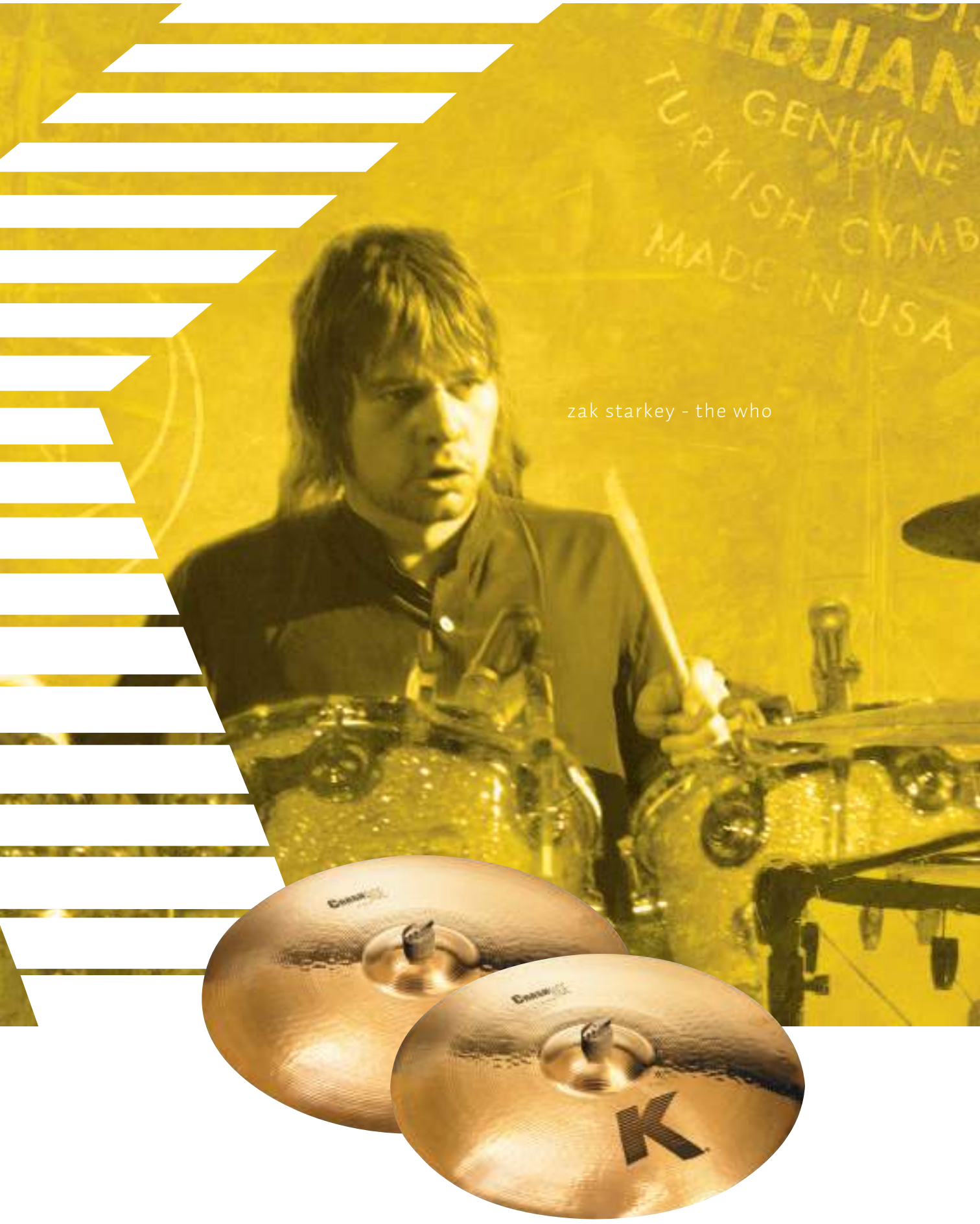

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AN EDITOR'S **OVERVIEW**

Ron's Lasting Influence

My late husband, *Modern Drummer* publisher and founder Ron Spagnardi, passed away in 2003. While it's been difficult to carry on without him, I'm very happy to report that this magazine, something he loved so much, has continued to grow and thrive.

One thing that pleases me a great deal is hearing from drummers who say they were influenced by Ron. At least once a month I receive a letter or email message telling me about how a drummer was inspired by something Ron had written, either an article or one of his many books. I've even heard from drummers who recall seeing him perform and how inspiring that was.

Along those lines, I recently received this wonderful letter from drummer Larry Crockett, which I want to share with you.

Dear Mrs. Spagnardi,

While playing a concert in Guadeloupe a few months ago, I met a young drummer who touched me. I met him at my soundcheck. He introduced himself with a lot of enthusiasm and respect. He was sincere and full of questions. His desire to grow as a drummer was obvious. Sensing how hungry he was, I agreed to give him a lesson on my day off.

We met at his practice room, which was located in a local cultural center where he also gives lessons to children in the neighborhood. We played and exchanged ideas, him showing me some of the traditional island rhythms and me answering his technical questions. It turned out that this young man had been in a bad car accident and was mainly interested in rebuilding his bass drum foot muscles.

All of a sudden, he started searching for a book that he said had really been helping him. Actually, it wasn't a complete book, but some very used, photocopied pages from a book. He was very happy to show me these exercises, which were excellent. I asked what book they were from, but he didn't know because a friend had given the pages to him. So we looked closer, and guess whose name we found faded out and barely readable? Ron Spagnardi.

You could've knocked me over with a feather. I just stared at it for a moment as my eyes began to water. I thought, after all this man did for drummers and drumming while he was alive, he's *still* making an important difference. There I was on an island with this drummer who had taped-up, broken drumsticks, homemade drums, and a burning desire to improve and become a professional drummer. And he was giving praise to Ron without even knowing who Ron was.

Then yesterday, one of my students brought in a book he was eager to study. Seeing how badly he wanted to learn from it, I said, Sure, let's check it out. When I asked him what the book was, he pulled it out of his bag. What was it? *Progressive Independence: Rock* by Ron Spagnardi. I just looked at him like, you've gotta be kidding me. So I said, Okay universe. I get it. I'll write to Mrs. Spagnardi right away.

I just wanted you to know that Ron's legacy is living on through his products, family, and you and your great team at *Modern Drummer*. We as drummers can never repay you and Ron for your tireless efforts and contribution to drumming.

Blessings to you,
Larry Crockett

P.S.: I'll tell you, wherever Ron is, he must be getting a kick out of this stuff.

Thanks, Larry. I'm sure he is.

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Volume 32 Number 4

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MODERN DRUMMER magazine (**ISSN** 0194-4533) is published monthly by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.**, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. PERIODICALS MAIL POSTAGE paid at Cedar Grove, NJ 07009 and at additional mailing offices.

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EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING/ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES: MODERN DRUMMER Publications, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Tel: (973) 239-4140. Fax: (973) 239-7139. Email: mdinfo@moderndrummer.com.

MODERN DRUMMER welcomes manuscripts and photographic material, however, cannot assume responsibility for them. Such items must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: US and Canada $34.97 per year; $56.97, two years. Other international $49.97 per year, $97.97, two years. Single copies $5.99.

SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE: Modern Drummer, PO Box 480, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0480. **Change of address:** Allow at least six weeks for a change. Please provide both old and new address. Call (800) 551-3786 or (815) 734-1170.

MUSIC DEALERS: Modern Drummer is available for resale at bulk rates. Direct correspondence to Modern Drummer Retail Vision, 2 Maple Street, Suite 6, Middlebury, VT 05753, (800) 381-1288.

REPRINTS: Reprints of Modern Drummer articles can be supplied on request. Contact Tracy Kearns at MD for details: (973) 239-4140.

INTERNATIONAL LICENSING REPRESENTATIVE: Robert Abramson & Associates, Inc., Libby Abramson, President, PO Box 740346, Boyton Beach, FL 33474-0346, abramson@prodigy.net.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Modern Drummer, PO Box 480, Mt. Morris, IL 61054.

MEMBER: National Association Of Music Merchants, American Music Conference, Percussive Arts Society, Music Educators National Conference, Percussion Marketing Council, Music Magazine Publishers Association

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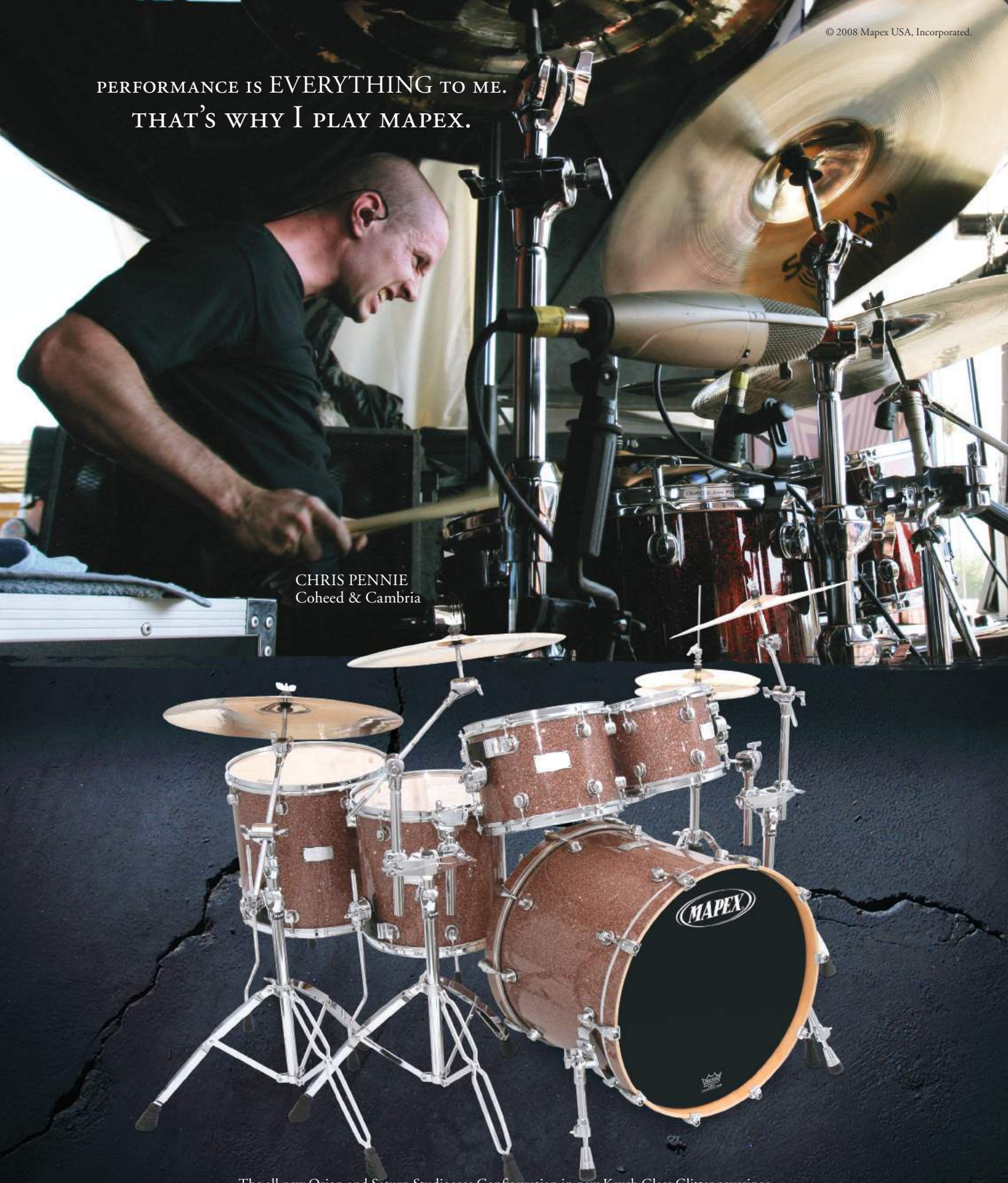

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Jojo Mayer

I want to thank you for giving me such exposure in your magazine. Thanks, too, to Ken Micallef for his dedication to the story. I'm very content with the way he translated my thoughts throughout the feature (which, after many other interviews, I certainly do not take for granted). And the reference to the Rosetta stone is probably the biggest compliment my DVD will ever get. Thanks again.
Jojo Mayer

Jojo's statement that "The new frontier in drumming is texture" is one of the best quotes I've ever read in MD. With so many drummers focusing on technique and independence, it's great to hear a master like Jojo make such an against-the-grain statement. I hope it leads drummers to focus less on displays of sheer technique and more on using their current technique to create previously unheard sonic textures on the drumset.
Matt

I loved the in-depth discussion of Jojo's style and influences. I also liked his comments about Stick Control—mainly the idea that practicing exercises out of a book for hours each day can only get you so far, and that after that you've got to experiment with whatever takes you to the next level. Words to live by.
Matthew Thomas

Dave DiCenso

Dave DiCenso's performance at the 2006 MD Festival introduced us to a remarkable drummer—and set the place on fire. (I know...I was there.) His interview in your

Paul La Raia

January issue introduced us to a remarkable man. T. Bruce Wittet did an outstanding job of conveying Dave's depth and personality. Thanks!
Allen Armitage

Matt Flynn

I was all set to dislike Matt Flynn, simply on the basis of his being in a mega-successful pop band that I can't stand. But after reading your January story on him, I came away with a different opinion. He's got a workingman's background that lends him credibility, he's pissed off by the overuse of Pro Tools, and he believes that "You're never too cool to play with any-

Alex Solca

one. Even the bad experiences teach so much." Sounds like a guy I could enjoy hanging with.
Bill Wantuch

Thanks From Montreal Drum Fest

At the 15th edition of our Montreal Drum Fest, held this past November 10 and 11, my producing partner, Serge Gamache, and I were asked to appear on stage in the middle of our Sunday program by T. Bruce Wittet. [Along with editing the Canadian magazine Drums Etc., Bruce is a regular contributing writer for MD.]

Before a full house waiting to see Thomas Lang perform, Bruce eloquently presented us with your beautiful 15th-anniversary award.

On behalf of our entire festival and magazine team, Serge and I thank all of you at Modern Drummer for supporting our efforts. In my acceptance speech, I pointed out the unique friendship and respect we had for [MD founder] Ron Spagnardi and your always-great staff. Thanks again.
Ralph Angelillo

Muse Off The Record

I've been wanting to see some of Dominic Howard's work with Muse in Modern Drummer for years, and your January Off The Record answered my prayers! I've found that some things are hard to play along with on Muse CDs, and I'm so glad to have at least some of it written out for me. (I'm only thirteen; give me time.)

Alice Barkwell

Keep up the great work. (That goes for you too, Mr. Howard!)
Peter Campbell

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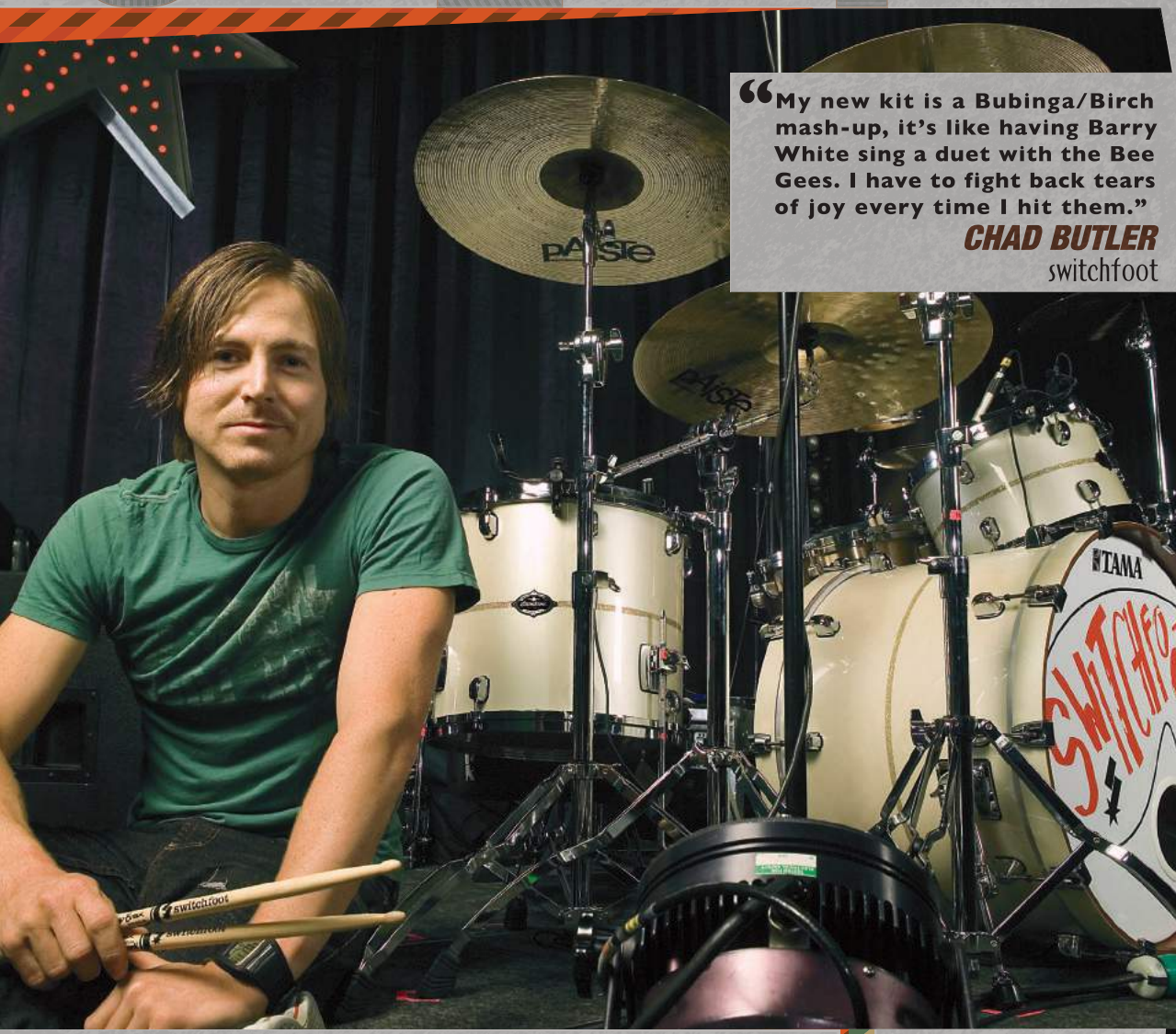

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Bill Stewart On Practicing

I' m a freshman in a collegiate jazz studies program, and I' m trying to fully grasp the concept of a "productive" practice session. I know the basic ideas that have been thrown at me over the years, but when it comes to actually mapping it out oneself, it' s a whole different thing.

How did you map out a productive practice session as a young drummer in college? What kept you focused and prevented you from burning out? Thank you so much for being such an inspiration.

Miles Bozeman

Thanks for your question, Miles. It' s a good one.

There' s an infinite list of things we could all be practicing, so deciding what to do on a particular day can be a matter of what your priorities are. What works best for one person might not work as well for someone else. In fact, I think it' d be dull if everyone practiced the same things. However, it is important for everyone to get the most out of their time spent practicing.

Some players have a practice routine, where they do some of the same things each time—perhaps as a warm-up. I don' t remember having a routine at any point, but I don' t discourage that as a component of your practicing if you feel it' s helpful. You could practice rudiments or exercises, but try to find musical and creative ways to practice them. Also, practice them at different volume levels, different speeds, with brushes, on different drums, etc. Throughout, really listen to the sound you' re getting. I don' t encourage mindless hand exercises on a practice pad during Oprah, and that sort of thing.

When I was developing my practice routines, I' d often work on things that I was having trouble with when I played with others. If I was having trouble with a particular tempo, or playing accurately and intensely at a soft volume, or understanding a song form, then that could be the subject of my next practice session. Rather than try to cover a lot of bases in a single session, I' d sometimes work on just one or two things. If you have a free hour, pick one thing you know you need to work on, and really concentrate on that.

There were also many times where I' d just go in and improvise at the drums for my practice session, with no advance agenda. In the process, I' d come across many subjects for a practice session when I would have an advance agenda. In this way, you' re also practicing the creative process.

A metronome is a good tool to check your tendencies at different tempos, but I' d avoid using it all the time, as you could become dependent on it to keep time for you. I also practiced with recordings (not necessarily trying to play like the drummer on the recording), which gives you some musical ideas to play off of. It can be fun too.

That brings me to your comment about the possibility of burning out. I think you should try to make your practicing musical, creative, and fun. If there' s no joy in your practicing, then it' s probably time to get out for a walk in the park. It' s also important to realize that musical development is a never-ending process. I' ve seen many talented young players get too down on themselves.

In a college situation, there are probably a lot of other musicians practicing down the hall. I spent a lot of time playing informally with other players in my college days. I' d even play duos with horn players, pianists, and other drummers. Actually making music with other musicians might be the best practicing of all, so I recommend taking advantage of those opportunities when you can. Happy practicing!

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Home Recording Tips From
Pat Mastelotto

I've read lots of great articles about home recording in Modern Drummer lately. However, I'm still perplexed by the amount of information and products available. I've visited forums, read articles, and researched Web sites—and I'm still somewhat lost. Do you have any recommendations for an affordable home recording system that I can also take to small gigs? I'd like to combine a PA system (mixer, amp, and four speakers) with recording ability.
Jonny Gold

There are so many choices for drummers today. You're doing the right thing by reading and researching, since the coins can go fast.

I highly recommend Ableton Live. It could be your "home studio" and your "gigging sampler" in a laptop. For multiple ins and outs get a small A (analog) to D (digital) interface, like one of the M-Audio firewire boxes.

PA system? It's sad that once we drummers dabble in electronics we suddenly have to provide the PA. A PA system is a whole different beast, and I think you should consider more of a personal monitor. I suggest a small Mackie mixer and some self-powered speakers. Check Craigslist or eBay for something used. Or, even simpler, try a self-contained full-range keyboard amp like the Roland KC series, or even a guitar amp. Heck, why stop there? Get some stomp boxes too.

Good luck...and try not to fry your ears or your bank account.

Ryan Chahanovich

QUICK BEATS

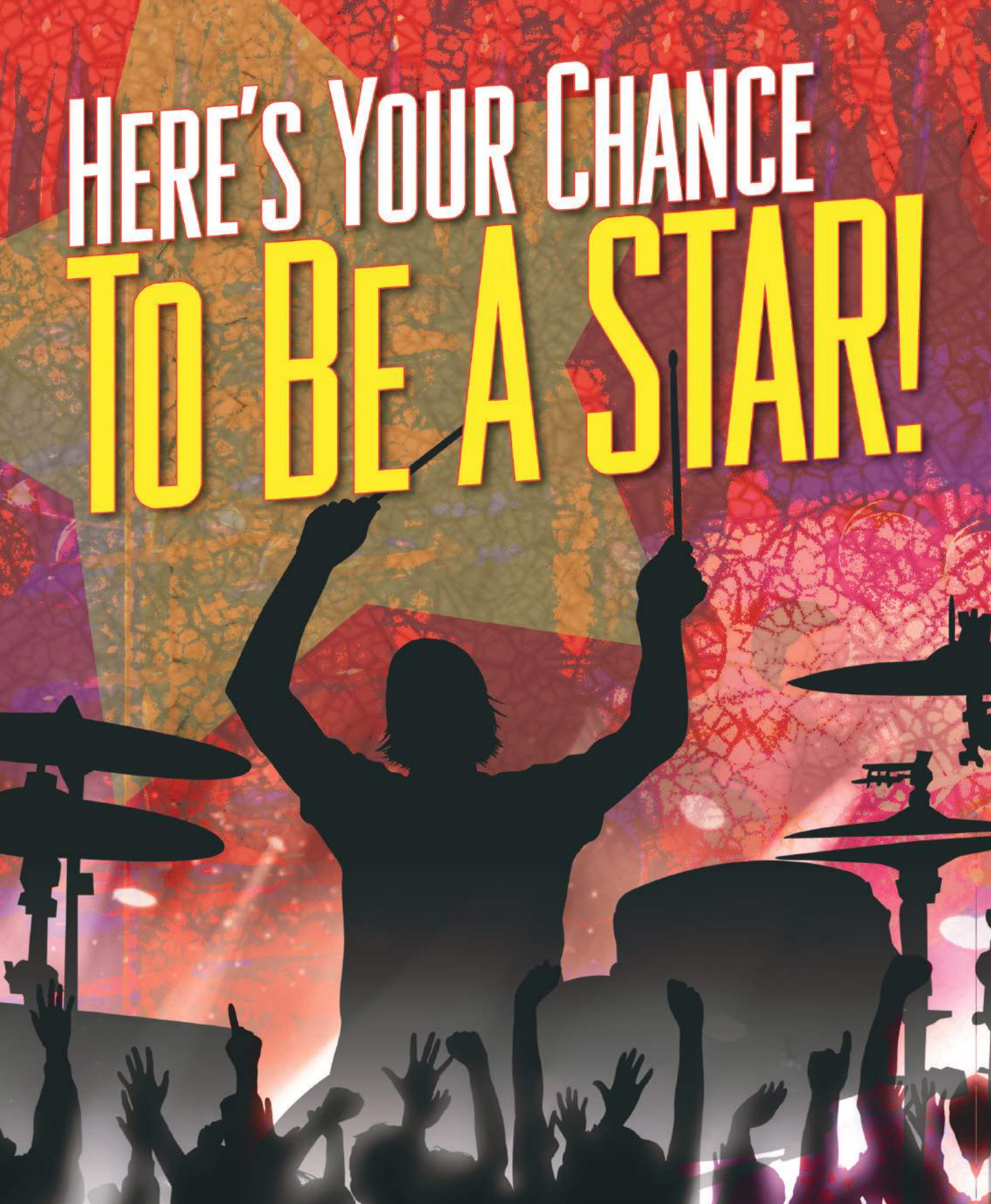
text and photo by Joe Perry

Editor's note: Elóy Casagrande made his US debut at the 2005 Modern Drummer Festival Weekend at the age of fourteen. Now seventeen, Elóy has gone on to become an in-demand clinician and performer, touring internationally with Brazilian artist André Matos.

Brazilian Drum Phenom
Elóy Casagrande

Place of birth: Sao Paulo, Brazil
Age started drumming: Seven
Hours of practice per day: Three
Influences: My teacher, Aquiles Priester, and Vera Figueredo
Hobbies/interests: Bike riding
How I relax: Study for school
Favorite food: Beans and rice
Favorite junk food: Chocolate chip cookies
Favorite TV show: *Faustao* (Brazilian)
Favorite actor: Jackie Chan
Favorite album: *Moving Pictures* by Rush
Favorite car: Ferrari
Other instruments I play: None yet, but I want to learn keyboards
Place I'd like to visit: New York City
I wish I'd played drums on: "Tom Sawyer" by Rush
Musicians I'd like to work with: Journey
Most prized possession: My gift from God to play the drums
Person I would like to talk to: Buddy Rich
Person I admire: My mom
Most memorable moment: Visiting the Pro-Mark factory in Texas on my recent clinic tour

EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS
rvh@moderndrummer.com



Consumer Disclosure

1) Winners to be selected by a panel of MD editors. 2) Employees and the immediate families of Modern Drummer, and their affiliates, are ineligible. 3) Odds of winning depend on the number of eligible entries received. 4) Contest begins March 1, 2008 and ends June 1, 2008. Entries must be received on or before June 1, 2008 to be eligible. Winners will be notified by phone and/or email on or before July 1, 2008. 5) Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 6) Contest open to drummers everywhere, void where prohibited by law. 7) Each of the 2 winners will receive an award plaque, a featured write-up in Modern Drummer magazine, and a check for $1,000 US. Approximate retail value: $1,500. 8) Approximate value for all prizes: $3,000. 9) No prize substitutions will be permitted. 10) Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, (973) 239-4140. 11) This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or the winners' names, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Modern Drummer Publications/Undiscovered Drummer Contest/Official Rules/Winners List, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009.

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1. Put a two-minute recorded drum performance on YouTube. Your performance may include time and groove playing in any musical genre (with or without musical accompaniment), or a full two-minute drum solo. Recorded examples lasting longer than two minutes will be disqualified.

2. Submit the following to *Modern Drummer* by regular mail:
- A completed and signed entry form (or photocopy), including the URL link to view your YouTube performance
- A check or money order to *Modern Drummer* for the entry fee of $25 (non-refundable)
- A brief bio of your drumming background (100 words or less)
- Proof of your age. (A copy of your driver's license or birth certificate is acceptable.) Your age as of June 1, 2008 will determine which group your performance is entered into.

3. Mail your entry paperwork to:
Undiscovered Drummer Contest, c/o Modern Drummer,
12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, USA.

ENTRY METHOD #2: Direct Submission To MD

1. Send a two-minute DVD or VHS video of your performance directly to *Modern Drummer*. (European formats cannot be accepted.) Clearly print your name, age, and phone number on your submission.

2. Follow all of the above instructions for the submission of your entry form, entry fee, proof of age, and brief bio to *Modern Drummer*.

3. Mail your complete entry package to:
Undiscovered Drummer Contest, c/o Modern Drummer,
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OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM

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Address_____
City_____
State_____ **Zip**_____ **Country**_____

Tel (_____)_____ **Email**_____
Age as of June 1, 2008_____
My performance can be viewed on YouTube at:
_____

( ) $25 Entry fee enclosed. Check or money order (US Funds), made payable to *Modern Drummer*.

Mail To:
Undiscovered Drummer Contest
Modern Drummer Magazine
12 Old Bridge Road
Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, USA

ENTRY FORM MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN JUNE 1, 2008.

The Grip Weeds'

Kurt REIL

Creating The Right Vibe

When New Jersey psychedelic revivalists The Grip Weeds decided to remix, remaster, and reissue their 1994 debut album, *House Of Vibes*, it didn't hurt that the band's drummer and lead singer, Kurt Reil, is also a professional recording engineer. "*House Of Vibes* was an eight-track recording done on a shoestring budget," the drummer recalls. "The drums were a stereo mix to two tracks, so we were very locked in with what existed.

"The idea was to make it sound as full-range as possible," Reil continues, "while being respectful of what was there. Listening to the tracks, I knew I could enhance them by using my ears and trusting my instincts to create something that works in the context of today." The vibrant results, *House Of Vibes Revisited*, shimmers with chiming '60s-style guitars, lush harmonies, and Kurt's powerhouse drumming, which recalls his primary influence, Keith Moon.

Kurt's studio is also named House Of Vibes, and the drummer/engineer is well-known among area musicians for the work he does there with his brother, Grip Weeds guitarist Rick Reil. Among the recent projects are several recordings with The Smithereens. On *Meet The Smithereens*, a re-recording of The Beatles' first album, Kurt worked with drummer Dennis Diken "in a very specific way to capture the essence of Ringo Starr" without losing Diken's own drumming imprint.

On *7th Inning Stretch*, the soundtrack to an ESPN special featuring Smithereens singer Pat Dinizio, Diken and company re-recorded three of their major hits, presenting Kurt with a "how to" lesson in capturing drum sounds from the '80s. "Songs like 'Blood And Roses' and 'Only A Memory' were recorded during the period when reverb was liberally applied to the snare drum," Reil explains, "along with gating and treatments that aren't done much anymore. To deconstruct these songs, discover how they were put together, and actually *record* them was like taking 'Recording 101.' I learned a lot about how the drums worked on those records."

Kurt also engineered, produced, and played drums on Dinizio's solo record, *PD*. "I was much more involved with Pat and his songs on that project," Kurt offers, "because I was interpreting them as a drummer. But that's what I do: First I work with the songwriter to find out what he wants, then I apply my own ideas and ability. Hopefully they dig it."

Gail Worley

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Joe Porcaro (educator): 4/29/30
Jake Hanna (big band great): 4/4/31
Jim Keltner (studio legend): 4/27/42
Clyde Stubblefield (James Brown): 4/18/43
Steve Gadd (drum great): 4/9/45
Doug Clifford (Creedence Clearwater Revival): 4/24/45
Bill Kreutzmann (Grateful Dead): 4/7/46
Joe Vitale (Crosby, Stills & Nash): 4/2/49
Steve Ferrone (Tom Petty/sessions): 4/25/50
Max Weinberg (Bruce Springsteen): 4/13/51
Narada Michael Walden (fusion great): 4/23/52
David Robinson (The Cars): 4/2/53
Rod Morgenstein (Dixie Dregs): 4/19/56
Chris Mars (The Replacements): 4/26/61
Mike Mangini (independent): 4/18/63
Mike Portnoy (Dream Theater): 4/20/67
Patty Schemel (Hole): 4/24/67
Aaron Comess (Spin Doctors): 4/24/68

Jay Gilbert

The Scorpions'
James KOTTAK
Still The New Guy After All These Years

Twelve years into James Kottak's tenure with The Scorpions—a gig that's taken him everywhere from Siberia to Brazil—the Kentucky-bred, LA-based drummer finally feels like he's made an album with the legendary band he can live with.

Deeming 1999's *Eye To Eye* "too loop-heavy" and 2004's *Unbreakable* "too Pro-Tooled and generic," Kottak says their latest, *Humanity—Hour 1*, was the perfect storm of strong songwriting, technology, and inspired drumming.

"It took some time to hone the songs," Kottak says in his southern-fried rasp. "But once guys like [outside writers] Desmond Child, Eric Bazilian, and Marti Frederiksen did their thing with our demos, it was like, 'Whoa, yes!'

"Then I recorded my Yamaha electronic kit over those tracks—we quantized it and made it perfect. Over those drum tracks, they went back and put everything on top. Three months later, I went in and re-recorded my parts to *those* tracks, and I could really sink in and let loose. Now I knew where to accent or where to fill or where to leave space for the melody."

Kottak almost didn't take the offer to join The Scorpions (who he first met in 1988 on the Monsters Of Rock tour as a member of Kingdom Come) when it was made in 1996. He was content singing and playing guitar in his band Krunk (now re-named Kottak), with his wife, Tommy Lee's sister Athena, on drums. Joining an established band as a hired gun didn't appeal to him.

"When I originally went to Germany to audition, I told them I wasn't a side guy and never would be," Kottak recalls. "They understood that, and I've always been encouraged to speak my mind. I'm like the junior partner at the law firm of [Rudolph] Schenker, [Klaus] Meine, and [Matthias] Jabs."

Kottak is still the new guy, though. So when his drum solo is running a little long for a founding Scorpion's liking, he's going to hear about it. "We played in Romania last fall, outside, for 50,000 people, and it was 28°. Everything seemed slower that night, especially my solo, 'Kottak Attack,' which is twelve minutes long and has many sections. Rudolph eventually sent his tech over halfway in and he yelled, 'James, hurry up, Rudolph is freezing!'"

Patrick Berkery

Collective Soul's
Ryan HOYLE
Jumping Off The High Ledge With Paul Rodgers

After graduating from the University of North Texas, Ryan Hoyle planned on building a successful career as a Nashville session drummer. But after being hired to drum on Collective Soul's 2004 album, *Youth*, and touring with the band for a year, those plans changed, when he officially joined the group in 2006.

During a hiatus prior to recording 2007's *Afterwords*, Ryan had the dream opportunity to play drums for one of his favorite performers, Free/Bad Co. singer Paul Rodgers. The brief UK tour included the recording of a live DVD, *Paul Rodgers Live In Glasgow*. While Hoyle was very familiar with Rodgers' catalog, the gig proved to be radically different from playing live with Collective Soul.

"Collective Soul's music is about consistency," Ryan explains. "It's more structured and focuses on how certain parts work together to create the whole. Much of our show includes click tracks, and some songs use sequencing or tempo guides. Paul's gig was quite the contrary. There was no click, and songs were drastically different in form and tempo from night to night. I had to get into a headspace where I could listen, play, and react almost like a jazz player."

The drummer adds that Rodgers' shows ran on an extensive number of visual cues, ranging from the way the singer threw his mic stand, to certain hand cues that signaled band members to go to the next section. "I had to really watch Paul's body language so I didn't get lost or miss an ending," Hoyle says. "When you're playing with a singer like Paul, he brings you up to his level. I'm much more confident now," he chuckles, "because I feel like I've jumped off a high ledge and didn't die!"

As a drummer, Hoyle is most passionate about maintaining an innovative approach to the kit. "I'm drawing inspiration from my experience as a programmer," he offers, "applying that back to the acoustic arena, discovering the millions of different sounds you can get from a drum. The spirit of drumming is all about doing many more things at one time than you should be able to do, *and* throwing in ideas that nobody would quite think of. There are no rules: it's completely wide open, and I love that."

Gail Worley

Jerry Gallegos

Tony PIA

New With The Brian Setzer Orchestra

Tony Pia's entrance into The Brian Setzer Orchestra, replacing drummer Bernie Dresel, was short and sweet. "I played like three songs," the drummer recalls of his audition for Setzer, "and he shook my hand and said, 'You're in.' Then he went on tour with The Stray Cats all summer, so we only began rehearsals in the fall."

Pia describes the gig as extremely diverse. "You need to have a good deal of experience playing rock 'n' roll and playing hard," he explains. "But you also have to be able to swing, have experience playing with a big band, and be able to read big band charts. I played with Maynard Ferguson's band, Woody Herman's Orchestra, The 1:00 Band, and Bobby Caldwell's big band, so I think that qualified me. Plus I had rock 'n' roll experience from playing with Edgar Winter, David Lee Roth, and Van Morrison.

"Brian's band isn't a traditional jazz band as such," Pia goes on. "It's rockabilly meets swing meets jazz—and it rocks. And Brian's new CD, *Wolfgang's Big Night Out*, features classical songs with a rockabilly feel."

Clearly Pia has to cover quite a few bases these days. In the middle of the current show, Setzer breaks down the band to a rockabilly trio format, with Pia on a stand-up drumset. "The challenging thing is the versatility that's required. You have to be able to drive and swing hard with a big band, and then play quietly with brushes with a small group. On one song I actually have to play a bell part. I never thought I'd have to do that. I studied marimba in college, so that's coming back into play."

Tips for swinging a big band? "I'm playing with some of the best musicians in LA," Tony admits, "so it's kinda easy to do. You just have to lay down the groove and make sure the time is great—and that everybody can rely on you."

Robyn Flans

UPDATE **NEWS**

George Schwindt is on the new Flogging Molly record, *Float*. He's currently on tour with the band.

Matt Chamberlain is on Missy Higgins' new record, *On A Clear Night*.

Deen Castronovo is in the studio with Journey. The veteran band just introduced their new lead singer, Arnel Pineda.

Zachary Alford and **Sterling Campbell** are on the B-52's' latest disc, *Funplex*.

Chris McHugh provides the drums on singer/songwriter Michael Nappi's debut, *Here We Go Again*. **Tony Morra** is on one track, "Fade To Black."

Trevor Lawrence Jr. is on Alicia Keys' latest, *As I Am*. **Steve Jordan** plays on the John Mayer duet track, "Lesson Learned."

Dorian Crozier, **Victor Indrizzo**, **Abe Laboriel Jr.**, and **Ashley Soan** are all on 2007 *American Idol* winner Jordin Sparks' self-titled debut CD.

Ryan Brown, **Billy Hawn**, **Gary Bruzzese**, and **Todd Chuba** drum on teen sensation Brittney Elizabeth's debut, *Breathe In*.

Aaron Sterling played drums on Virginia Coalition's new album, *Home This Year*.

Rodger Carter and **Gregg Bissonette** are on Rick Springfield's *Christmas With You*. Carter is also on *American Idol* year-one runner-up Justin Guarini's upcoming release, and on his own debut CD, *Saturday Morning Cartunes*. It's available at www.thedoghousestudio.com.

Jerry Leoni is on the road with The Lettermen.

Congratulations to **Dave Clark** of The Dave Clark Five on being inducted into The Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. The late **Mel Taylor**, of The Ventures, was also inducted.

DRUM DATES

This month's important events in drumming history

Dave Tough was born on 4/26/07, **Lionel Hampton** on 4/12/09, **Tito Puente** on 4/20/23, **Bobby Rosengarden** on 4/23/24, **Ray Barretto** on 4/29/29, *Modern Drummer* publisher **Ronald Spagnardi** on 4/25/43, Average White Band's **Robbie McIntosh** on 4/25/50, The Knack's **Bruce Gary** on 4/7/52, and **Jeff Porcaro** on 4/1/54.

Buddy Rich passed away on 4/2/87, educator **Frank Malabe** on 4/21/94, **Cozy Powell** on 4/5/98, **Carlos Vega** on 4/7/98, Nazareth's **Darrell Sweet** on 4/30/99, **Claudio Slon** on 4/16/02, and Jefferson Airplane's **Skip Spence** on 4/16/99.

4/4/61: Trumpet player Booker Little records *Out Front* with **Max Roach** on drums, Ron Carter on bass, and Eric Dolphy on sax.

4/6/74: Deep Purple (with **Ian Paice** on drums) headline California Jam, the famous rock music festival held at the Ontario Motor Speedway in Ontario, California.

4/15/89: Four months after his death, Roy Orbison hits the Top-10 on the pop charts for the first time in over twenty years with "You Got It," featuring **Jim Keltner** on drums.

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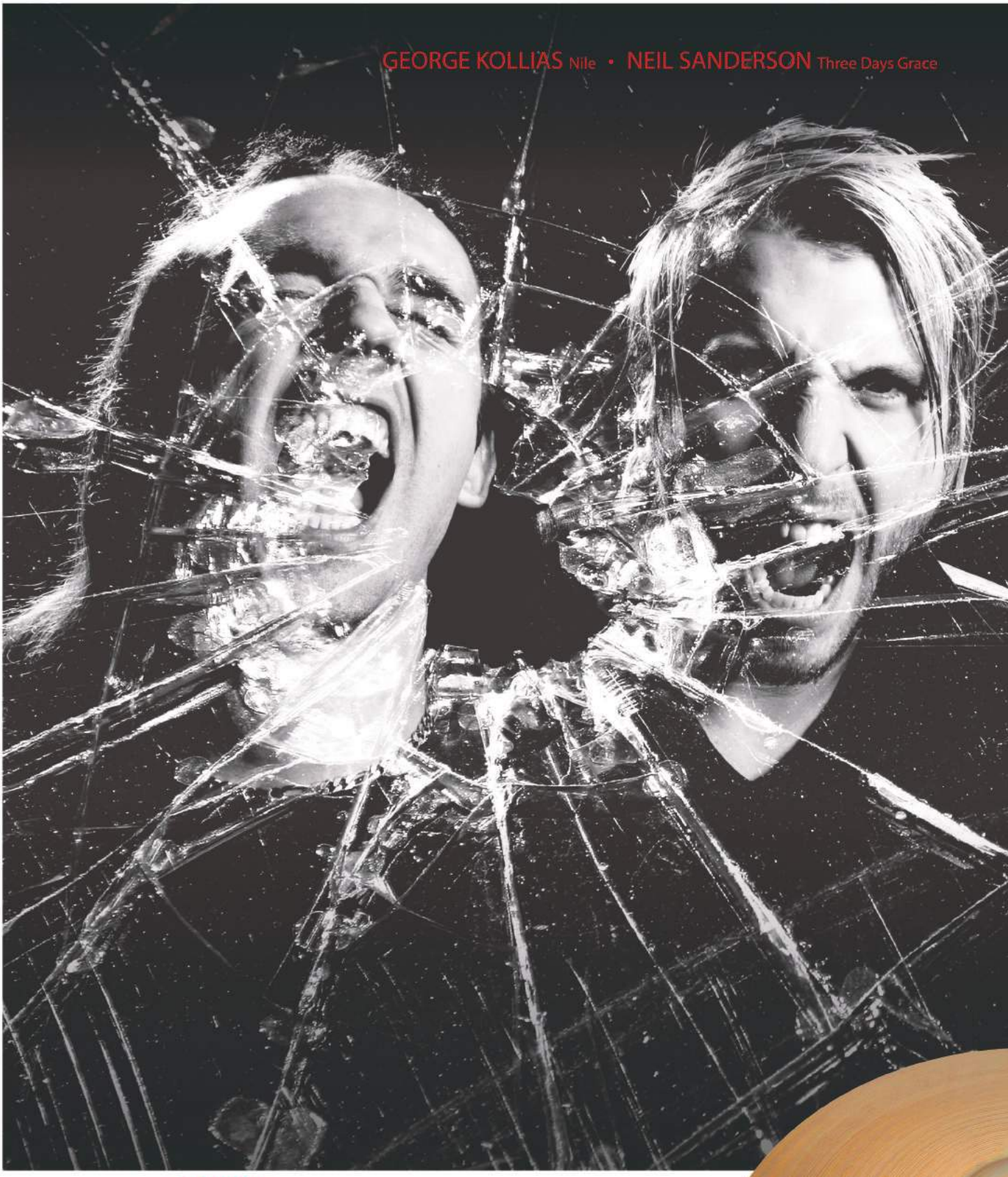
Nick Lynn - Drummer



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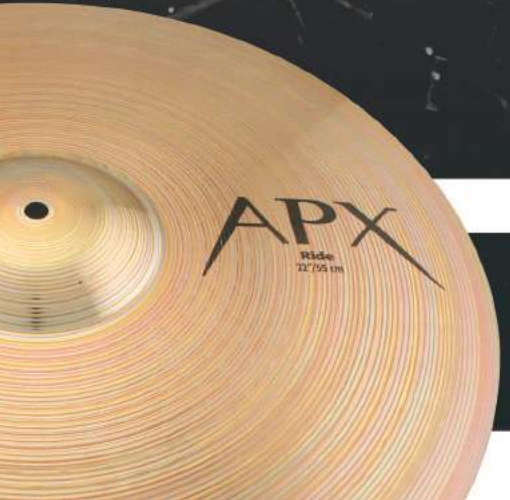

SABIAN

BECAUSE SOUND MATTERS

IT'S QUESTIONABLE

Vintage Gretsch Bass Drum

When I purchased the old Gretsch bass drum shown here, all I could get was the shell and the hardware. I later bought maple hoops, which I coated with polyurethane. I repaired and re-plated two of the claws, then refinished and reassembled the shell and hardware. I finished off with new heads: a front head with the Gretsch logo, and a clear batter head. It makes for a beautiful drum that, frankly, doesn't sound all that great. I'm certain that the shell is out of round.

The drum has a single row of centered (pass-through) lugs, and long T-rods that thread into the opposing claws. There are no other holes to indicate mounts for spurs, cymbals, or toms, so I assume it was a marching or concert bass drum. The badge says "Gretsch, drum makers since 1883." I'd like to know the likely age of the drum and its possible value.

Brett Beardsley

According to MD drum historian Harry Cangany, "What you have is a Broadkaster single-tension bass drum from about 1960. That model was gone by the mid-'60s. As it is, it doesn't really have much resale value.

"Single-tension drums sound bad because both heads are tensioned to the same degree. They are museum pieces that started falling out of favor as early as the 1920s, when modern lugs were introduced. They were kept in the drum companies' catalogs as the lowest-cost alternatives. This bass drum was probably in a starter set (with hoop-mounted spurs, which is why you see no holes for them) or sold to a school as a concert drum.

"Here's how to make your drum sound better without doing anything that cannot be undone. Take off the pass-through lugs and fit swivel nuts—like you'll see in a snare drum's lugs—into both sides. Hopefully, they'll fit without enlarging the holes. Then fit the drum with long square-headed tension rods or T-rods that can screw into your new double-ended lugs from each side of the drum. If you plan to use the drum with a pedal, add a set of hoop-mounted spurs. (You can get these parts from most custom drum parts suppliers.) Now you'll have a separate-tension drum instead of a single-tension model. Even if the drum is out of round, this should improve your ability to tune it."

Recycling Cymbals

Is there a cymbal company that will replace, buy back, or give some sort of credit for cracked cymbals? It seems to me that the metal might be worth something.

Giuseppe

If you have a cymbal that has cracked within its warranty period, you should contact the manufacturer (through your local dealer) regarding replacement or credit toward a new cymbal.

If you're referring to older damaged cymbals that might be candidates for recycling, that's a question that's come up several times over the years. While some cymbal companies use recycled material in the manufacturing process, that material must be obtained in bulk in order to be practical as a raw material. So the manufacturers contract with major recyclers for scrap copper wire and certain types of scrap tin material.

Unfortunately, it isn't practical for manufacturers to buy back cracked cymbals on an individual basis. If a retailer wanted to take on the task of being a middleman and collecting enough broken cymbals to create a significant amount of scrap metal, a manufacturer might purchase that material. But few, if any, retailers have the cash resources or the storage space to become bulk recyclers. So it simply hasn't happened.

Instead of thinking "recycling," you might want to think "re-use." Some cracked cymbals can be repaired, others can be used to create effects instruments. (MD senior editor Rick Van Horn ground a cracked 16" crash down to about 13" in diameter. The result was a cool-sounding mini-gong.) Some drummers we know have turned cracked cymbals into lampshades; others use them as part of metal sculptures and other artworks. Use your imagination!

This blue Vistalite kit with single-braced hardware was a highlight of Ludwig's 1975 catalog.

Cleaning Vistalite Drums

I' ve recently acquired a 1970s Ludwig Vistalite kit, complete with its original hardware. The kit' s been in storage for almost fifteen years, so it' s musty and dusty. What cleaning products would you recommend to restore the look of the drumshells and hardware?

Tim Poirie

For the Vistalite shells, Ludwig sales coordinator Gary Devore tells us, " The Ludwig factory in Monroe, North Carolina uses Novus products to clean and polish Vistalite shells. There are three products in the Novus line: #1 Clean And Shine, #2 Fine Scratch Remover, and #3 Heavy Scratch Remover. We use #1 and #2 with good results. You can check out Novus products on their Web site at www.novuspolish.com or call them at (800) 548-6872 to find a distributor."

For the chrome hardware, there are any number of chrome polishes and restorative products available in auto parts stores. We also recommend Trick Liquid Cymbal And Metal Polish from Trick Percussion.

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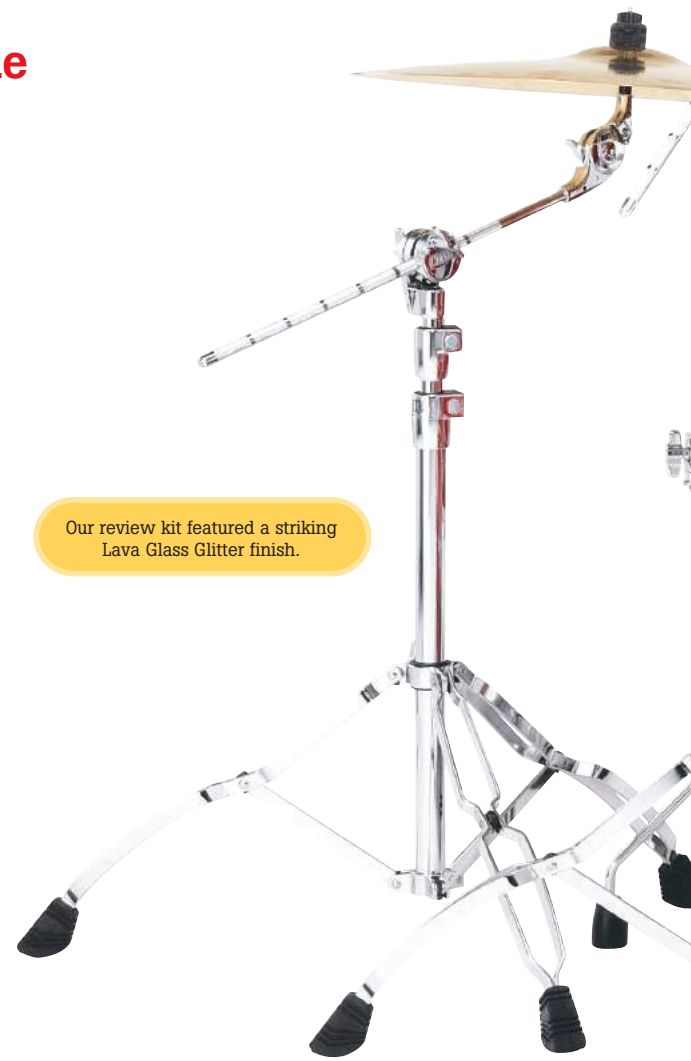
Tama Starclassic Performer Birch/Bubinga Kit

>> A Musical Two-For-One Sale

by Chap Ostrander



Our review kit featured a striking Lava Glass Glitter finish.

KEY NOTES

- Two-wood design accomplishes its acoustic goals
- Bass drum is fitted with a versatile sliding tom mount
- Lava Glass Glitter finish is an eye-catcher

Hybrid designs seem to be the trend these days, and many drum companies are following that trend with drumshells. To this end, Tama has introduced the Starclassic Performer Birch/Bubinga kit in order to offer drummers a distinctive new sound.

The aspect of birch that most people favor is the clarity and punch that it provides. Bubinga is a warm shell material with lots of lows. The combination of both in one package is acoustically stunning.

The Kit Configuration

Speaking of stunning, our review kit was covered in a red-orange wrap called Lava Glass Glitter. The finish has been out for only a few years, and it' s expensive—but it looks absolutely fabulous. If you' re used to ordinary sparkle finishes, you have to experience the look of real crushed glass.

The insides of the Birch/Bubinga shells are finished in a dark stain.

The 18x22 bass drum had an 8-ply/8-mm shell, with three inner plies of bubinga and five outer plies of birch. The dark-stained bubinga gave the inside of the drum an attractive look. The insides of the bass drum hoops were finished the same way, in striking contrast to the orange sparkle wrap on the outsides.

The 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms, the 14x16 floor tom, and the $5^1/_2$x14 snare all had 7-ply/7-mm shells, with three inner plies of bubinga and four outer plies of birch. The kit came fitted with Evans G2 (top) and G1 (bottom) heads on the toms, with a G1 coated batter and Resonant 300 snare-side head on the snare. The front of the bass sported a slightly off-white Tama logo head; the batter was an EQ4.

Sound

Tama' s purpose in mixing woods was to combine the best characteristics of both. After playing the drums at length, my judgement is that they succeeded admirably. The drums have a wonderful punch. The birch gave the drums clarity and lively response. The bubinga injected warm tones underneath the bite of the birch. The sum of these qualities made the drums great fun to play.

Tuning the bass drum proved interesting. It could be tuned up into bebop range, where it did a respectable job. But I thought it sounded better tuned down—almost into head-flapping range—where it produced lots of lows. While the birch element of the shell gave the sound lots of punch and definition, there was thunder underneath.

The rack toms had full, round voices. As with the bass drum, they worked respectably in a high tuning range, but they really seemed happier tuned down. I could get them really low before the heads got too loose. The floor tom' s somewhat shallow depth helped project its full, deep, and clear voice.

All the toms were incredibly easy to tune. They responded clearly to changes of tension, and they just sang while I worked with them. It was fun to play on drums with such articulation over the full frequency range.

ROLLING GLIDE COBRA COIL PEDAL

As part of this review I had the opportunity to check out Iron Cobra single and double Rolling Glide pedals fitted with Tama's new Cobra Coil feature. Rolling Glide pedals feature a circular sprocket–drive, as compared to the eccentric-cam drive on Power Glide pedals. Although the Rolling Glide model is smooth and quiet, pedals with circular-sprocket drives can sometimes feel a little sluggish, as compared to the way an eccentric cam speeds up the action of the pedal.

You can only do so much for a pedal's feel by adjusting the beater position, pedal height, footboard angle, and spring tension. So Tama's designers developed the Cobra Coil to overcome this limitation. The Coil is a spring underneath the footboard that helps propel that footboard back up. It's mounted on a track, so you can adjust the effect: Slide it forward for less spring, slide it back for more spring. The Coil is insulated against the footboard with a strip of felt, and there's foam inside to keep it quiet.

I began my testing by playing the basic Rolling Glide pedal, without the Cobra Coil. Predictably, the action was smooth and quiet, but with a fairly heavy feel and slow return. Then I installed the Coil—and the pedal immediately felt lighter and more responsive. Even the lightest spring setting had an effect on the action. I tried it at different settings, and I'm sure most players could find one that would work for them.

The Cobra Coil spring below the footboard provides a quick action.

Up to now, the only way to change a pedal's stroke action was to change the tension of the main spring—which, in turn, affected the overall playing resistance and feel of the pedal. With the Cobra Coil you can achieve a lighter-feeling pedal that retains your preferred spring tension. Talk about adding some spring to your step!

The Cobra Coil is now standard on all new Rolling Glide pedals, and it can be retrofitted to 2007 models. A single pedal with the Coil lists for $224.99; a double pedal goes for $519.99.

In terms of sound, my idea of a good snare drum is one that can roll from a whisper on up to a wall of sound, and that can produce rimshots that will pierce the back of the theater. The birch/bubinga snare embodied those qualities. It could sound like everything from brushed silk to crackling fire, making it the kind of snare that you just want to keep playing.

Drum Hardware

Our review drums came fitted with chrome Starclassic lugs, and with die-cast hoops. The rack-tom hoops incorporated Tama's Starclassic mounting system, which has been improved to help position the drums closer together. The bass drum was equipped with the MTH909 double tom holder, which sits on a fitting that can slide forward and back over a 2" range. The down tube that goes into the bass drum is 3" long, and that tube contains another that's $5\frac{1}{2}$" long. So not only can you slide the toms back and forth, you also have two places at which to raise or lower them. Combine all this with Tama's Omni-Ball system, and we're talking serious positioning flexibility.

The floor tom legs were fitted with Air Pocket rubber feet, which "float" the drum for improved sustain. The bass drum's die-cast claw hooks have rubber inserts to protect the wood hoop, and the convertible spike/rubber foot spurs feature a ruled guide for consistent set-up. The snare drum features Tama's Hold Tight washers on the tension rods to keep the rods from loosening.

Stands And Pedals

The hardware pack available for this kit features stands from Tama's RoadPro series, which has been reviewed before in MD. It's all top-quality, double-braced professional gear, with a bevy of innovative features (which you can check out on Tama's Web site). Suffice it to say, this stuff is state-of-the-art.

The hardware pack also includes the HP900P Iron Cobra Power Glide single pedal, supplied with a carrying case. Again, you can get feature details from Tama's Web site. In the meantime, let me just say that this is a top-quality, highly adjustable pedal whose speed and durability has made it especially popular with hard-stomping drummers.

Conclusion

Tama has been hugely successful with the development of the Starclassic Birch/Bubinga kit. The woods in the shells contribute their characteristic sounds, resulting in a terrific acoustic symbiosis. I love the Lava Glass Glitter finish, but if it's not to your taste kits are available in three lacquer finishes and six Dura-Cover wraps. The drum hardware and RoadPro stands are thoughtfully put together, with great design features. And finally, the kit comes at a list price that seems realistic for its professional quality and unique character. You can't ask for much more than that.

THE NUMBERS

Starclassic Performer Birch/Bubinga Kit **$3,399.99**
(Includes an 18x22 bass drum, 8x10 and 9x12 toms, a 14x16 floor tom, a $5\frac{1}{2}$x14 snare drum, and a complete hardware package featuring RoadPro stands and an Iron Cobra Power Glide single pedal.)
www.tama.com

Starclassic Performer Birch/Bubinga kits are also available in wrapped finishes like the new Astral Black Diamond finish shown here.

Quick Looks

AQUARIAN TEXTURE COATED SNARE BATTER WITH Z-100 COATING

by Rick Van Horn

In ads for their Z-100 coating, Aquarian modestly claims to have re-invented the single-ply coated head. While that may be a *slight* exaggeration, the Texture Coated 14" snare batter Aquarian sent us to examine definitely embodied all of the qualities that they claimed for it. The head was, in fact, "sensitive, resonant, and easy to tune." Of course, this is what any good snare batter should be, but none I've tried have been more so than this model. The snare-drum sound it produced was crisp, clear, and eminently musical.

Aquarian's promo also says that the Z-100 coating is "the most durable ever developed." That's hard to evaluate within a relatively brief testing period, but I can say that I played the head on three high-energy showroom gigs, as well as on six performances and several rehearsals of a local musical revue, and you'd hardly know I took it out of its box.

When I wanted a little more information about the new coating, I called Aquarian and spoke with company president Roy Burns. He stressed how hard they'd worked to get this new coating consistent and smooth across the drumhead surface. (It certainly looked that way on our review head.) He also mentioned that the coating was designed to make brushes sound louder, with less playing effort and reduced snagging. I found this to be true when I used the head on the musical revue mentioned earlier. Wire and plastic brushes alike glided over the surface of the head, while the coating provided just the right resistance to create a very satisfying "swish" sound.

While Aquarian hasn't literally re-invented the coated head, they definitely have taken things a step further. Their Texture Coated snare batter with Z-100 coating sounds and plays great while offering impressive durability. Nice job!

Z-100 coated heads are currently available only in Aquarian's Texture Coated series, in 6" through 28" sizes. The 14" snare batter we tested lists for $23.22.

www.aquariandrumheads.com

Turkish Cdrk And Rdrk Series, 8" Big Bell, And 20" Classic Reverse-Bell China

>> Unusual Looks Create Unusual Sounds

by Chap Ostrander

KEY NOTES

- Cdrk models have a dark, jazz-oriented sound with some spread
- Rdrk models have a dryer, more articulate sound
- Reverse-Bell China offers versatile mounting options

Cymbals made by the Turkish Cymbal Company impress you with their sense of heritage, which dates back hundreds of years. At the same time they offer designs to meet contemporary musical styles.

Recently, Turkish introduced new models created by slightly altering two of their most popular lines—the Classic series of standard professional cymbals, and the Kurak custom series. They added to the weight of the cymbals, increased the bell size, and gave them a matte black coating. For our review, each of the modified series was represented by 14" hi-hats, a 16" crash, and a 20" ride.

Cdrk Cymbals

Cdrk (Classic Dark) cymbals have traditional lathing and regular hammering on the top and bottom. Their sound is full-bodied yet reserved. The "reserved" part refers to the dark qualities of their voices, which give them the character of vintage jazz cymbals.

The ride built up under heavy playing, but still stayed under control. Its moderately heavy weight made stick response fast and bright. The ride also produced an enormous wash of sound when I laid the shaft of the stick along the middle. In addition, the large bell

rang through clearly, allowing for piercing accents.

The 16" crash spoke quickly with a full, satisfying voice. It responded well to mallets, rising in volume at a predictable rate. The hi-hats were very controlled, with great stick response and articulation. When I played them with the Cdrk ride, it was a match made in heaven.

Rdrk Cymbals

The Rdrk (Raw Dark) series is similar to Turkish' s Kurak line. The cymbals are totally unlathed, with prominent hammer markings on top and underneath. Again, the new models are slightly heavier, with larger bells, and they' ve been given the black treatment.

" Raw" is a great name for these cymbals, since that was the impression I got while playing them. The ride was very dry, with greater definition than that of the Cdrk model. The heavy, unlathed surfaces produced intense stick response and clear accents. The Rdrk ride didn' t build up the same wash that the Cdrk did, and it was definitely not as broad-spectrum as its counterpart. The bell sound cut through like a bullet and mixed in well with ride patterns.

Though the 16" crash had a strong crash voice, the sound was not as wide as that of the Cdrk. Still, it also worked well with mallets, staying under control as I tried rolls of different volumes. The sizable unlathed bell also proved useful for creating great accents.

The hi-hats were matched in voice with the ride and crash. Their sound was not as complex as the Cdrk sound. In fact, generally speaking, the Rdrks are not subtle cymbals. But not everyone wants to be subtle. I' m sure they would be favored by metal players, or by fusion players who need to cut through amplified sound with intricate ride patterns and powerful crash accents.

About The Darkness

The black finish on the Cdrk and Rdrk cymbals showed stick marks, and I was worried that the finish might rub off onto other cymbals in my bag. I was told by the company that while any fine cymbals like these should be protected during travel, I shouldn' t worry about the finish coming off, because it' s an industrial coating, not a paint. And in truth, the finish held up under my travels, with no rub-off.

On a special note, the black finish on all of the " drk" models features a hint of a golden color underneath the flat black. This gives them a sort of black-gold hue that' s very striking.

8" Big Bell

Also new from Turkish is the 8" Big Bell, from the Rock Beat series. This heavy little bell is all overtones and attitude. It features a new polishing process that adds lots of luster, with the hammering shown off through the shine. The underside of the bell is so smooth that it looks unhammered, though that' s not the case. The bell' s piercing sound makes for a fabulous shot of color. I loved working it into various patterns.

20" Classic Reverse-Bell China

This unusual China model has its bell in an inverted position. So it can be mounted in a traditional right-side-up manner, with a ride area below the bell and the edge protruding down.

Riding on the flat surface generated a full wash of bright overtones. Smacking the edge produced traditional China heat. Overall, this cymbal had a great mix of colors that worked well in different settings. I got to use it as a quiet ride as well as a China accent on my kit, and I almost burned down my house when I used mallets on it. That sound was powerful and virtually endless.

Conclusion

Turkish cymbals carry the experience of the ages, with sounds and designs for today' s players. They' re thoughtfully designed, and their hand-made quality is evident. The new models reviewed here offer a wide spectrum of visual and sonic options. Check ' em out.

THE NUMBERS

14" Cdrk and Rdrk hi-hats	$450
16" Cdrk and Rdrk crash	$270
20" Cdrk and Rdrk ride	$450
8" Big Bell	$125
20" Classic Reverse-Bell China	$350

www.turkishcymbals.com

Quick Looks

DRUMART.COM GRAPHIC BASS DRUM HEADS

by Rick Van Horn

When we approached Jim Feck of DrumART.com about examining some of his graphic drumheads, he asked us to challenge his artists with three types of orders: a design based on a photograph, a design based on a graphic logo, and a design that matched an actual drumset finish.

For the photo, we selected the "mad scientist" shot of me that was used in an *MD* subscription ad some time ago. Since I teach at the KoSA drum camp, we asked for a logo head featuring the KoSA 12 graphic. And, as a real challenge, we asked Jim to match the finish on the 1965 champagne-sparkle Gretsch kit I use with '60s singing group The Duprees.

Jim and his crew more than rose to the occasion. The color scientist photo was superimposed on a black & white background shot of a laboratory that Jim found, to separate the images. The KoSA logo—a virtually identical match to the "chrome" printing of the original—was placed on a black head for contrast. And while Jim says that the champagne sparkle finish was his biggest challenge and that he hopes to improve on it, I was impressed with how well it matched the finish of my vintage kit. (Jim was also kind enough to surprise me with a shield design containing my initials.)

All of these images were applied as permanent laminates over Aquarian Regulator resonant bass drum heads. They added a little additional muffling effect to those already self-muffled heads—to the point where I was able to remove the small pillows I'd had inside the drums. In other words, the application of the graphic heads helped make the drums sound bigger and fuller.

DrumART.com heads are custom jobs, so prices may vary with the order. A more or less "standard" permanent design goes for around $90, which includes the cost of the head. To put a high-quality, durable, and totally original image on the front of your drumkit, it's money well spent.

www.drumart.com

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Taye Metalworks XP1 Bass Drum Pedals

>> Sleek, Strong, And Super-Adjustable

by Rick Van Horn

KEY NOTES

- Modular design
- Excellent engineering and construction
- Wide range of adjustability

The XP1 offers innovative design features and terrific performance.

The Taye Drum Company has been a quiet up-and-comer over the past several years. They' re still not a household name, but their line contains some genuinely innovative drum and hardware concepts. The latest of those is the Metalworks XP1 bass drum pedal series. The line includes single and double versions in a unique modular design.

Design And Construction

Let' s talk about engineering for a minute. There' s lots of it in the XP1. In fact, it' s built like a tank: just as heavy-duty, and just as complex. There' s a $^{7}/_{8}$"-thick footboard with matching heel plate, which should stand up to the most brutal stomping. There' s a solid-steel baseplate fitted with molded-plastic drum-hoop supports and a massive (and conveniently wing bolt–operated) hoop clamp. There' s a double-chain drive system. And there are enough adjustment options to suit even the pickiest foot.

The pedal looks sleek and modern, because there are no drumkey-operated bolts protruding anywhere. Instead, all of the many adjustments are secured by one or two heavy-duty (there' s that phrase again) set screws that are recessed into their respective fittings. Just don' t lose the Allen wrench that comes with the pedal, or you' ll be in big trouble.

The " modular" concept of the XP1' s design means that if you have a single pedal, its tower—the entire assembly that stands up from the baseplate—can be reversed on that base-

Left-right beater-angle adjustability is an unusual feature of the XP1

This diagram shows the various pedal configurations made possible by the XP1's modular design.

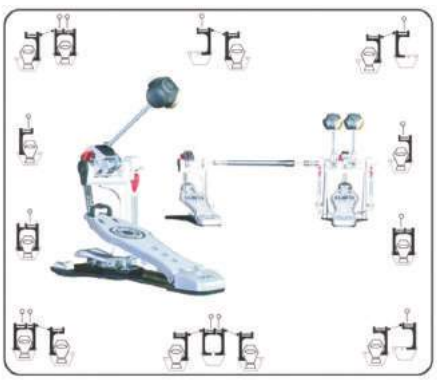


plate. This lets a single pedal serve as a left or right slave pedal for a double-pedal setup—or even for an "outboard" single-pedal setup connected to another single pedal. Likewise, the tower of the primary double pedal can be reversed to facilitate a right- or left-foot double setup. (See the diagram on the previous page to get the idea.) You could buy a single pedal now, and know that if you wanted to upgrade to a double, you'd be able to incorporate your existing single. You wouldn't have to buy a whole new double pedal.

Fine Tuning

The XP1 comes with all the standard adjustments that you'd expect on a professional pedal, including spring tension, footboard angle, and beater throw. But it also comes with some not-so-standard adjustments. One of those is a cam that allows you to vary the leverage between an even, circular action and a quicker eccentric action. Also adjustable is the length of the baseplate—and thus the distance of the footboard's heel plate from the pedal's tower. This, in turn, affects the footboard's angle and the way it pulls the chain.

Also non-standard is the way the beater shaft can be adjusted. Naturally it can be raised or lowered. But it can also be tilted on a left-right axis. This means that on the single pedal you can tilt the beater shaft slightly to put the beater directly over the chain, which will center the impact point on the bass drum head. (Otherwise the beater will hit slightly off-center.) On the double pedal this tilting feature means that the beaters can be positioned to achieve symmetrical impact points left and right of dead center.

In what we think is an especially clever feature, the fitting that holds the beater shaft can be adjusted forward and back (closer or farther away from the bass drum head). This further fine-tunes the leverage of the beater throw. It also lets you adjust the pedal to different hoop depths on different bass drums, in order to get a consistent pedal feel from one drum to the next.

A Big Beater

The XP1 comes fitted with a convertible three-way beater, with felt, wood, and plastic surfaces. The beater shaft is a hex rod that fits into a matching hole in its holder, so it can't twist out of position. The only downside to this design is that the beater weighs 4.3 oz., as opposed to an average of 3 oz. for most beaters. That's a lot of weight to swing through an arc. It's great for power and impact, but not so great for achieving speed or a light feel.

A three-way beater is convenient in terms of not having to carry three separate beaters. But, truth be told, unless you're on a studio session, you're not likely to switch beater faces from song to song on a gig. And even if you wanted to, the XP1's hex-shaped beater shaft and receiving hole would prevent your being able to do so quickly.

We swapped the three-way beater for a lighter two-way plastic/felt model, and the pedal's quickness problem was dramatically improved. We achieved the same result by lowering the XP1's three-way beater quite a bit—but then the bottom of the beater shaft touched the bass drum head. A hack saw could solve that problem pretty easily, but perhaps a lighter beater as original equipment would be a good idea.

It Knows When To Let Go

The underside of the XP1's baseplate is equipped with ribbed rubber non-slip pads, as opposed to the hook & loop fastener strips that are commonly used on pedals these days. We see this as a good thing. The spurs on most bass drums provide pretty secure resistance to slipping, so a pedal that grips tenaciously to a drum rug really isn't necessary. Besides, having to yank such a pedal off a rug risks damaging the bass drum hoop in the process. There'd be no such problem with the XP1.

It's Worth The Tweaking

The many adjustment points on the XP1 offer virtually unlimited tailoring of the pedal's action and feel. Of course, this might have you scratching your head at first. Where do you start in order to get your own personal feel, and how do you know when you've achieved the "ultimate" setting for each adjustment? Unfortunately, there's no substitute for trial & error, and that's going to mean a good deal of test playing, and then getting down on your knees, with the Allen wrench in hand, to make adjustments.

However, we can assure you that this tedious process will, eventually, get you to a point where the XP1 feels fantastic to play on. Whether you like your pedal stiff-springed and impact-heavy or light and bouncy, the XP1 can give you exactly that. Combine that potential for personalization with the XP1's excellent construction and attractive appearance, and you've got a pretty impressive package.

THE NUMBERS

XP1-01 single pedal, with soft bag $329
XP1-02 double pedal, with carrying case $769
www.tayedrums.com

Alesis Trigger iO

Flexible And Affordable Trigger-To-MIDI Power

by Michael Dawson

With every upgrade, drum and percussion software instruments continue to become more powerful, more realistic-sounding, and easier to use. So there will likely come a time when you' ll want to look beyond the built-in sounds of your electronic drumset or external sound module in favor of some of the things you' ve been toying with on your laptop. Or you might want to build a custom electronic kit using different types of pads, triggers, and sound sources. In order to do those things, you' re going to need some type of trigger-to-MIDI interface to convert the analog signals from the pads and/or triggers to the digital information that will tell your drum machine or software instrument to play a sound. One such interface is the Alesis Trigger iO.

This powerful little unit is a trigger-to-MIDI gateway that allows you to use whichever triggering devices you choose—be it simple single-zone pads like Yamaha' s TP65s, dual-zone pads like Roland' s PD-8s, or acoustic drum triggers like Pintech' s RS-5s—to create a unique electronic setup that can then trigger sounds from a drum machine or sampler (via MIDI) or from your computer (via USB). You can also connect a hi-hat controller pedal and a dual footswitch for extra flexibility.

Once you' ve attached your triggers or pads to the back of the iO, various parameters for each device can be fine-tuned to give you the most realistic feel and response. You can adjust each trigger or pad' s gain and velocity curve to accurately track your dynamics, while the threshold and retrigger functions allow you to dial in the lowest dynamic and the minimum amount of time between hits that will trigger a sound. Alesis also includes an " X-Talk" function designed to prevent the " cross-talk" that occurs when loud hits on one pad cause other pads to fire a signal.

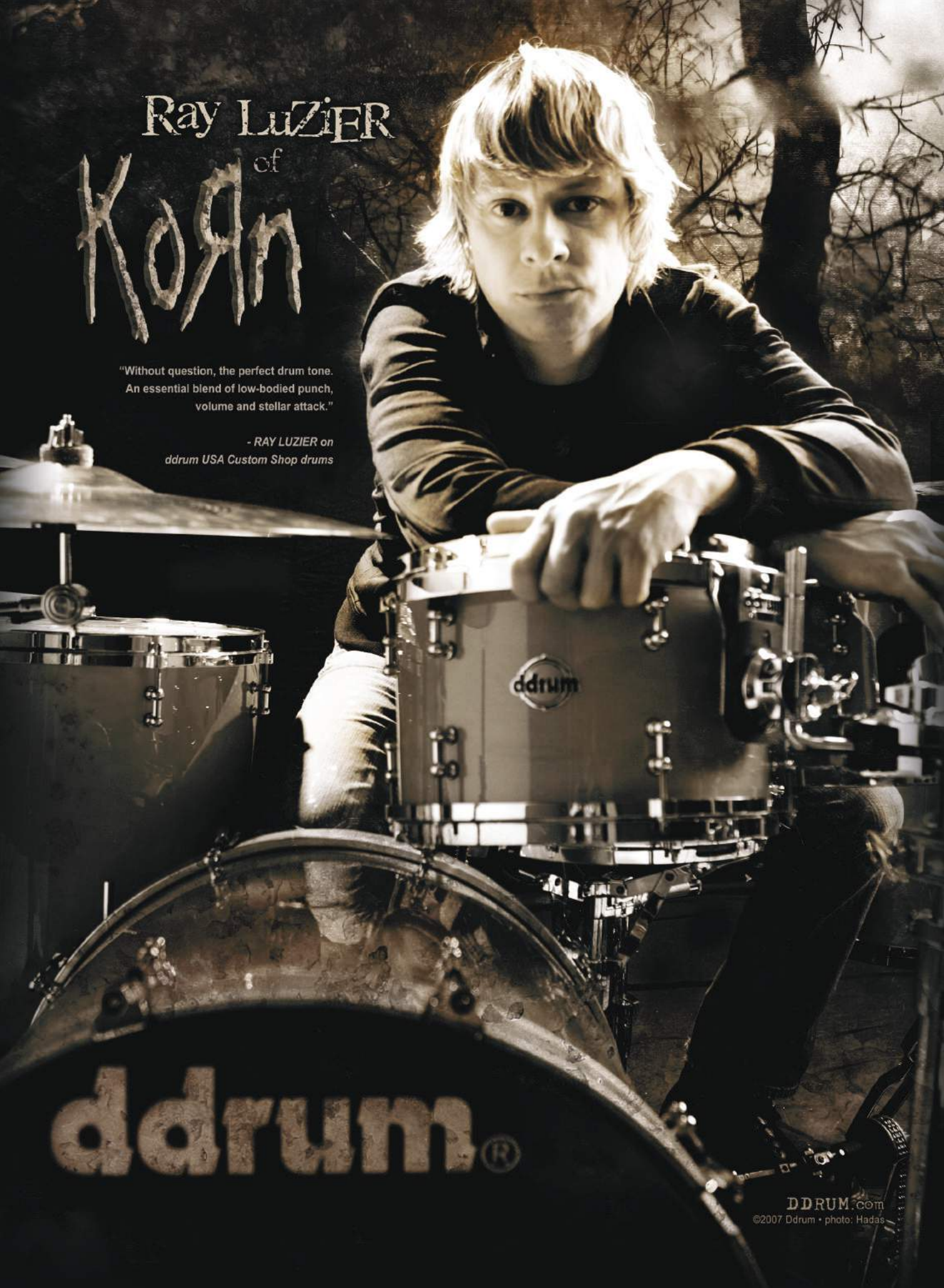
We tested the Trigger iO using Yamaha DTXTREME IIS and Roland TD-7 electronic kits and Pintech RS-5 acoustic drum triggers. For sounds we tried three external modules, an old Roland TR-505, a Roland DR-5 Dr. Rhythm Section, and the Yamaha DTXREME II brain. We also tested the unit using various software instruments, including BFD Lite (which is supplied with the Trigger iO), Toontrack EZdrummer, Native Instruments Battery, XLN Audio Addictive Drums, and Garageband' s virtual drumkits. On both e-kits, the pads triggered the appropriate patches right away. But the retrigger and threshold settings had to be tweaked a bit to eliminate double hits. Loud hits on the floor tom pads of the Yamaha kit also caused a noticeable amount of cross-talk. Raising the X-Talk setting eliminated that problem.

One problem we couldn' t get rid of, however, involved the Yamaha hi-hat controller. For whatever reason, this particular electronic pedal wouldn' t register with the Trigger iO. We were able to assign hi-hat sounds to the pad, but the pedal would not activate open/closed functions. The Roland FD-7 hi-hat controller worked fine.

When used with Pintech triggers on an acoustic bass drum and snare, the iO' s threshold and retrigger parameters required more detailed adjustments to prevent double triggers and missed hits. But once everything was fine-tuned, the unit performed flawlessly.

VITAL STATS

List price: $299
Size: $8\frac{1}{2}$" x 5" x $1\frac{3}{4}$"
Sound Source: BFD Lite software
Power supply: AC adapter or USB cable (included)
Inputs: 10 TRS trigger, hi-hat controller, up/down footswitch inputs
Outputs: MIDI, USB
Memory: 70 programmable presets
www.alesis.com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Consumer Disclosure: To enter online, visit www.moderndrummer.com between the dates below and look for the Mapex Contest button (one entry per household and/or email address). 2. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 3. CONTEST BEGINS 2/1/08 AND ENDS 3/31/08. 4. Grand Prize Drawing: Winners will be selected by random drawing on 4/15/08. Winner will be notified by phone or email on or about 4/17/08. 5. Employees, and their immediate families, of Modern Drummer, Mapex, and their affiliates are ineligible. 6. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 7. Open to residents of the US and Canada, 18 years of age or older. Void in Quebec, Canada, Florida, and where prohibited by law. 8. One prize awarded per household per contest. 9. Grand Prize – One (1) winner will receive Mapex Orion Chocolate Burl 6-piece component pack. A Modern Drummer 25 Year + Year 26 Digital Archive. Approximate retail value of the grand prize: $5,935. First Prize: One (1) winner will receive (1) one Mapex Pro M Classic Plus 6-piece kit complete with hardware and gig bag set. Approximate retail value of first prize: $2,459. Second Prize: One (1) winner will receive a Mapex Pro M Rock 5-piece kit complete with hardware. Approximate retail value of prize: $1,999. Third Prize: One (1) winner will receive a Mapex Black Panther 12x7 Maple and Cherry snare drum. Approximate retail value of prize: $509. Approximate retail value of contest: $11,095. 10. Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, (973) 239-4140. 11. This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or the winner's name, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Modern Drummer Publications/Mapex/Official Rules/Winners List, 12 Old Bridge Rd., Cedar Grove, NJ 07009.

FIRST PRIZE:
SIX-PIECE ALL MAPLE PRO M CLASSIC PLUS

Drumset includes 22x20 bass drum, 12x9 and 13x10 tom toms, 16x16 and 18x16 floor toms, 14x7 snare drum. Hardware included: (2) TS960A Tom Stands, B550A Boom Stand, S550A Snare Stand, H750A Hi-hat Stand, P750A Bass Drum Pedal. Includes 6-piece gig bag set! Cymbals not included.

MSRP: $2,459

SECOND PRIZE:
FIVE-PIECE ALL MAPLE PRO M ROCK KIT

Drumset includes 24x18 bass drum, 13x10 tom tom, 16x16 and 18x16 floor toms, 14x6.5 snare drum. Hardware included: TS960A Tom Stand, (2) B550A Boom Stands, S550A Snare Stand, H750A Hi-hat Stand, P750A Bass Drum Pedal. Cymbals not included.

MSRP: $1,999

THIRD PRIZE:
BLACK PANTHER 12x7 MAPLE AND CHERRY SNARE

6.2mm Maple Shell with exterior Cherry veneer ply. Gloss natural finish, 2.3mm Powerhoops, Chrome finished hardware, 20-strand snare wire.

MSRP: $509

>>SONOR STEVE SMITH 30TH ANNIVERSARY KIT

Steve Smith and Sonor have developed a 30th Anniversary Kit to honor Steve's thirty years on Sonor drums. The kit features 9-ply beechwood shells finished in Bird's-eye Amber satin lacquer, with special-edition badges. Drums include a 16x20 bass drum, 8x8, 8x10, and 8x12 rack toms, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, a 5x12 matching snare drum, and a $5^{1}/_{2}$x14 cast steel S-Classix snare.

www.sonor.com

>>PAISTE SIGNATURE REFLECTOR BELL RIDE

Paiste's new Signature Reflector Bell ride was created in collaboration with Nicko McBrain of metal pioneers Iron Maiden. It's reminiscent of the Sound Creation Bell ride that Nicko used throughout the 1980s, but updated to his current specifications and created in the Signature Series utilizing Paiste's Reflector finish. Available in 20" and 22" sizes, it features a full, fairly dark, shimmering sound character, with a clear full ping over a large, deep harmonic wash, and a strong bell, making it well-suited for the intricate stick work that is a hallmark of Nicko's playing style. The label "Powerslave" and a rendition of Iron Maiden's mascot, Eddie, have been placed on the 22" version.

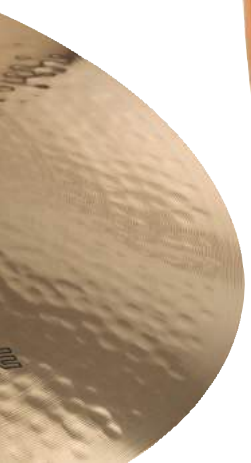
www.paiste.com

>>NEW ZILDJIAN K CUSTOM HYBRID MODELS

Zildjian's K Custom Hybrid cymbal series—designed with Japan's Akira Jimbo—has been expanded to include 15" ($382), 16" ($418), and 18" ($487) crashes, 14 1/4" hi-hats ($702), and a 17" China ($473). The cymbals combine the unlathed, brilliant finish of K Custom rides on the inner half, with traditionally finished K lathing on the outer half. This offers two different sound dynamics, depending on where the cymbal is played.
www.zildjian.com

>>TYCOON SIGNATURE GRAND CONGAS

Tycoon Percussion's Signature Grand conga series combines classic wide-body designs with advanced handcrafting to offer high-end performance and tone quality with a stunning appearance. The 11" quinto, 11 3/4" conga, and 12 1/2" tumba feature North-American ash shells in a natural satin oil finish, with 10% wider bellies for more air movement and a fatter, warmer, more resonant sound. Additional features include Classic-Pro hoops, premium-grade calfskin heads, and brushed chrome hardware. Matching requintos, bongos, and djembés are available.
www.tycoonpercussion.com

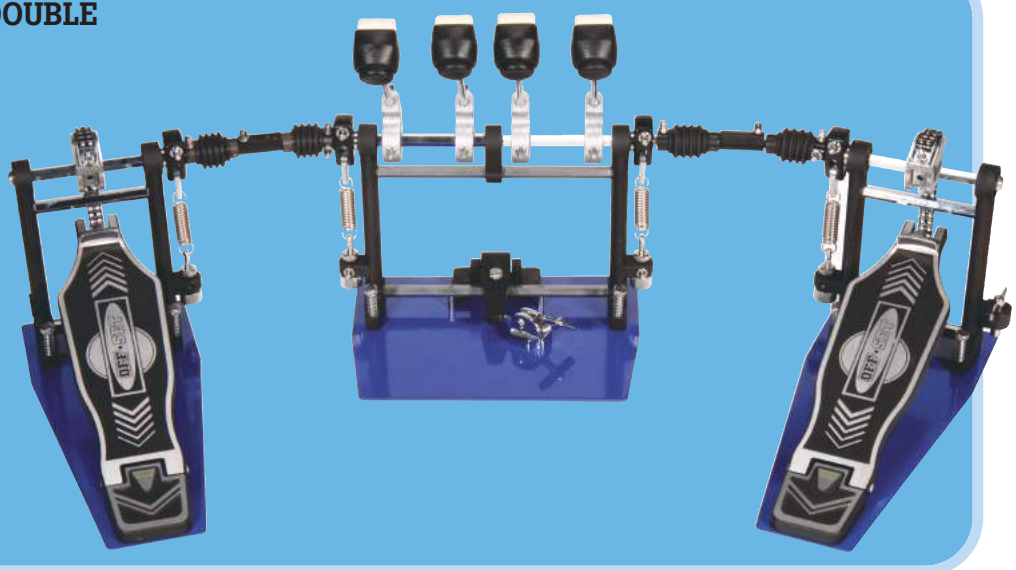


>>MAPEX LIMITED EDITION ORION CHOCOLATE BURL KIT

Mapex's Limited Edition Orion Chocolate Burl drumset combines a highly figured exterior burl veneer with six North American maple plies to create an ultra-thin (6-mm) and ultra-resonant shell. The kit is available in six-piece component packs, including an 18x22 bass drum, 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, and a matching $5^1/_2$x14 snare drum—all featuring black chrome hardware and a white-coated front bass drum head. List price is $5,799.99.
www.mapexdrums.com

>>OFF-SET DOUBLE-DOUBLE BASS DRUM PEDAL

Off-Set's "Maximus" double-double pedal is so named because it maximizes the use of the resonant areas of the bass drum head with four beaters. Two act in unison on each side, yet are independently adjustable from each other. With this set-up one can activate four completely different resonant areas of the bass drum head—either two with each stroke, or four with a flam. The pedal features bearing-loaded footboards, heavy-duty springs, radius-adjustable drive wheels, double-chain drive, independently adjustable beater holders, hard-soft beaters, and solid metal baseplates. List price is $429.99.
www.off-set.net



>>BOSPHORUS RIKKI ROCKETT RIDE AND CYMBAL SWIPES

The Bosphorus Rockett Ride, designed by Rikki Rockett of Poison, is three kilograms of hand-hammered potential energy coiled to deliver arena-size volume. It features an oversized unlathed bell that meets a polished lathed area for high-powered projection. It's available in 20" ($550) and 22" ($600) sizes.

And to keep all your cymbals clean, Bosphorus offers Cymbal Swipes. Just a swipe removes years of grime and returns the original luster and shimmer, without removing logos. Swipes are packaged for easy dispensing and portability, at $18 per package.

www.bosphoruscymbals.com

>>GRETSCH CATALINA CLUB TRIBAL TATTOO KIT

This new addition to Gretsch's Catalina Club series features a silver tribal tattoo overlay on a black sparkle PVC wrap. The kit includes a 20x22 bass drum, an 8x12 rack tom, a 14x16 floor tom, and a 6½x14 snare drum. Each drum's tattoo is proportionate to its shell size, adding to the kit's overall boutique appearance. Other features include mahogany shells with 30° bearing edges and natural interior finishes, mini-GTS tom-suspension systems, and black hardware. List price is $999.

www.gretschdrums.com

>>NEW PEARL SIGNATURE SNARES

Three new signature snares from Pearl are as different as their namesakes. For high-volume playing there's the 5½x14 Jimmy DeGrasso snare, with a hammered brass shell and gold-plated hardware ($649), as well as the Morgan Rose snare, with a 5x14 steel shell, stainless-steel tension rods, and a green metallic finish with glow-in-the-dark "Alien" graphic ($499).

The Mike Mangini model is designed as a distinctive auxiliary snare. It features a 6-ply, 100%-birch shell in a unique 6.2x10 size (based on the ancient architectural concept known as the "Golden Ratio"), with a "Phi" graphic covering. The drum is equipped with swivel tube lugs, SuperHoop II hoops, and an OptiMount holder, at $499.

www.pearldrum.com

>>DJDRUMS

DJdrums are made by Wang Percussion, a veteran Taiwanese manufacturer now offering drums under their own brand name. Drums are made using a Fixed Mold Shell Construction (FMSC) system to ensure that every shell is perfectly round. Precision-cut 45° bearing edges promote maximum resonance. Toms feature suspension mounting; toms and snare drums feature die-cast hoops.

DJdrums' Sapele Custom series (right) offers shells with a beautiful red-brown grain with golden stripes. The drums produce a mellow tone with a pure, deep voice. Maple Custom drumkits (above) come with 100% North American maple shells and hoops for balanced, tight tones. The Hyper Shell snare drum series includes solid bamboo and ash models, as well as hollowed walnut and bubinga models (with a space between the inner and outer plies).

www.wangpercussion.com.tw

>>TOCA PERCUSSION ITEMS

New percussion instruments from Toca include a $12\frac{1}{2}$" wide by $20\frac{1}{2}$" tall by 13" deep cajon with an adjustable burl oak front plate. It's fitted with dual adjustable snares, a padded seat, and rubber feet, and is designed to produce crisp overtones and improved bass tones. It lists for $269.

Toca's 10" Acacia tambourine is made from acacia wood for a lightweight feel, with an easy-grip rubber handle. Eight double-row nickel-plated jingles provide a variety of tonal ranges for recording or live playing. List price is $29.

Finally, Toca's Freestyle Series Rainstick produces a sound resembling that of falling rain. The lightweight and durable 39"-long shells are decorated in Santa Fe and Boa Snake hand-painted designs. List price is $35.

www.tocapercussion.com

>>NEW VIC FIRTH SIGNATURE STICKS

Vic Firth's signature stick line now includes several new models. The model for Nicko McBrain of Iron Maiden features a 5B shaft—16" long and .595" in diameter—with a beefed-up neck and tip. Fall Out Boy drummer Andrew Hurley's stick features a full-sized shaft at .630" in diameter and 16½" long, with a medium-sized oval tip for a full sound on drums and clarity on cymbals. Hellyeah drummer Vinnie Paul's stick is designed with a longer 16⅞" by .630" shaft and an enlarged teardrop tip for added power. The model designed for Gospel drummer Jeff Davis is a blend of 5A and 5B models at .585" in diameter and 16¼" long, to provide versatility. The Jeff Davis stick lists for $14.50; the Nicko McBrain, Andrew Hurley, and Vinnie Paul sticks are priced at $15.
www.vicfirth.com

>>NEW PEARL PERCUSSION

New to Pearl's percussion line is the Anarchy Block. Intended to complement the Anarchy cowbell, this all-black, spike-riddled, ear-splitting synthetic wood block will cut through the heaviest metal rhythm sections as a piercing alternative to a rimshot. The swivel mount lets the block mount virtually anywhere on a drumkit via any standard ⅜" percussion post. List price is $39.

Also new is the Ultra Grip Tambourine with Jingle Control. The Ultra-Grip's ergonomic shape is positioned near the tambourine's center of gravity for comfortable playing. The Jingle Control Discs allow the jingles to be selectively muted to control the tambourine's volume. Each tambourine is equipped with Pearl's QuickMount holder, which allows the tambourine to instantly go from mounted to hand-held. List price is $49 with stainless-steel jingles or $59 with brass jingles.

Finally, Pearl's Primero Box Cajon is made from Asiatic pine and finished in Gypsy Brown matte lacquer. It features fully adjustable snares and a front plate designed for maximum bass and super-sensitive snare response. List price is $165.
www.pearldrum.com

>>GAS ACRYLIC DRUMS

Gas Custom Drums of Melbourne, Australia offers handmade acrylic drums with shells made of 8 mm–thick Shinkolite with a custom V-groove join for optimal strength, weight, and tone. All Gas drums have hand-cut and polished bearing edges and are available in custom colors. Snare drums are fitted with brass vintage tube lugs and Dunnett throw-offs and butts. Snare drums range from 8x12 to 10x14 (floor snare), toms range from 8x10 to 14x18, and bass drums range from 16x20 to 14x30.
www.gascustomdrums.com

AND WHAT'S MORE

The PCX (Punch Collar X-tra heavy) beater from **SLUG PERCUSSION PRODUCTS** is for drummers who want the heaviest foot feel possible, with maximum volume. A fixed 1-oz. collar is attached under the Hytrel plastic beater head, delivering aggressive attack and "thud in the chest" punch. The balance-tapered shaft improves playing feel and power, and is guaranteed bend-proof for life. The self-adjusting, dual-sided head design has two different sounds and playing feels. List price is $44.
www.slugdrums.com

NADY's USB-1C condenser microphone connects directly to any computer with a USB 2.0 (or higher) input port for easy plug-and-play operation. It's said to be ideal for creating high-quality recordings of vocals, acoustic instruments, and ambient instrumentation, as well as for podcasting and online communication. The mic features full frequency response, increased dynamic range, maximum SPL capacity, and rugged, compact construction. A 10' USB cable is included.
www.nady.com

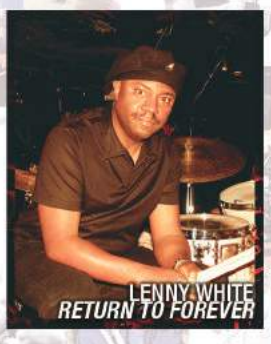
MUSICORP's SD1SW three-piece Percussion Plus drumset is designed for aspiring drummers from age three to five. Quality features provide a real drum feel and sound, with a 13" bass drum, a 10" snare, an 8" tom, a cymbal rod with an 8" cymbal, and a bass drum pedal with felt beater. The set also includes drumsticks and a drumkey. It's available in a unique Swirl finish at $149.95.
www.musicorp.com

ZILDJIAN's Antonio Sanchez Artist Series hickory drumstick combines a standard .550" shaft with extra length ($16^{1}/_{4}$") and a heavier front end, which allow for heavier hitting when the music demands it. The stick features a barrel tip for excellent definition and full drum tones, and is finished with Antonio's "Diablo" signature in metallic red for extra brilliance. List price is $16.15.
www.zildjian.com

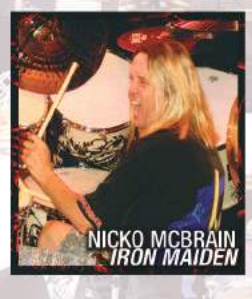
The Kotz Cube from **KOTZ PERCUSSION** is mounted at an angle on sculptural wooden legs. It was designed by custom builder Michael Kotzen and drummer, percussionist, and educator Homero Chavez to suit live and recording applications. Instead of sitting on the cajon, the player sits behind it and can comfortably play pedal-mounted auxiliary percussion. The design allows the instrument to resonate freely for deep bass tones and crisp slaps as well as a wide range of intermediate tones. A front-mounted hole projects the sound towards the audience. List price is $329.
www.tonecajon.com

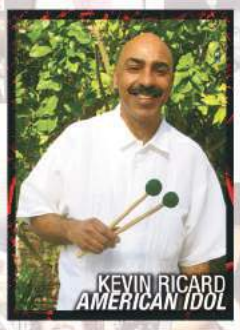
Jason Bonham worked with the design team at **PRO-MARK** to create the Jason Bonham SD531W Autograph model. The American rock maple stick is $16^{1}/_{2}$" long and .595" in diameter. It features a relatively short taper and a large modified acorn-shaped wood tip for added power and volume. List price is $13.45.
www.promark.com

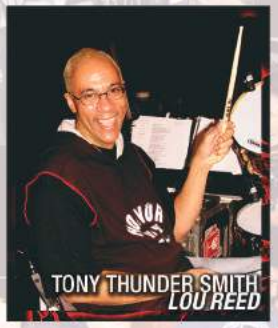
FORD has augmented its Smart Ass line of musician seats with coordinated seat backs. Reminiscent of the upholstery common to classic T-Birds and Corvettes of the 1950s, the Ford Smart Ass features contrasting seat bands, tops, and piping, along with three quilted stitching styles and another called "the thong." The shape of the seat back mimics Ford's logo while matching the seat color and stitch pattern.
www.forddrums.com


LENNY WHITE
RETURN TO FOREVER

DAFNIS PRIETO
MICHEL CAMILO

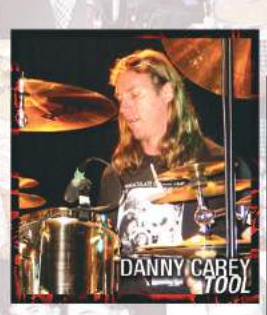

NICKO MCBRAIN
IRON MAIDEN

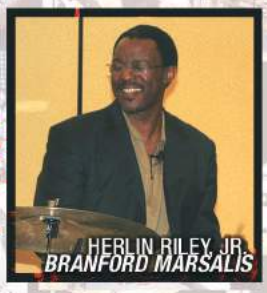

KEVIN RICARD
AMERICAN IDOL


TONY THUNDER SMITH
LOU REED

JOHN TEMPESTA
THE CULT

MAT MARUCCI


DANNY CAREY
TOOL

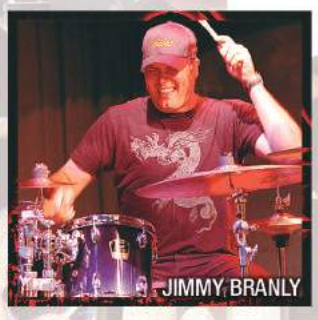

HERLIN RILEY JR.
BRANFORD MARSALIS

BRANDON SALLER
ATREYU

SOME FAMILIES YOU'RE BORN INTO
SOME YOU CHOOSE
WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

JOEY HEREDIA

LARRY LELLI
BROADWAY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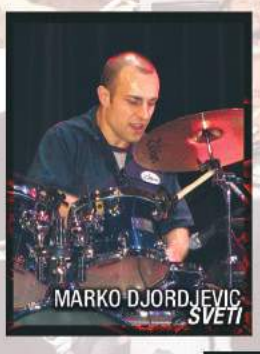
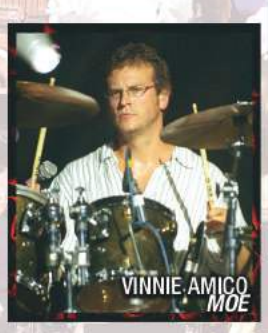

MARKO DJORDJEVIC
SVETI

MINO CINELU


VINNIE AMICO
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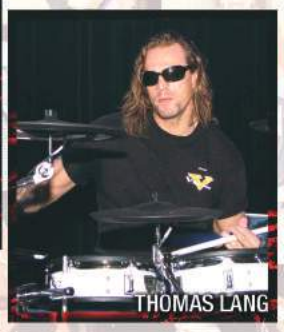
YELLOWCARD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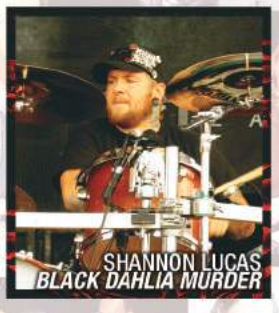
SHANNON LUCAS
BLACK DAHLIA MURDER

STEVE JORDAN

VIC FIRTH®

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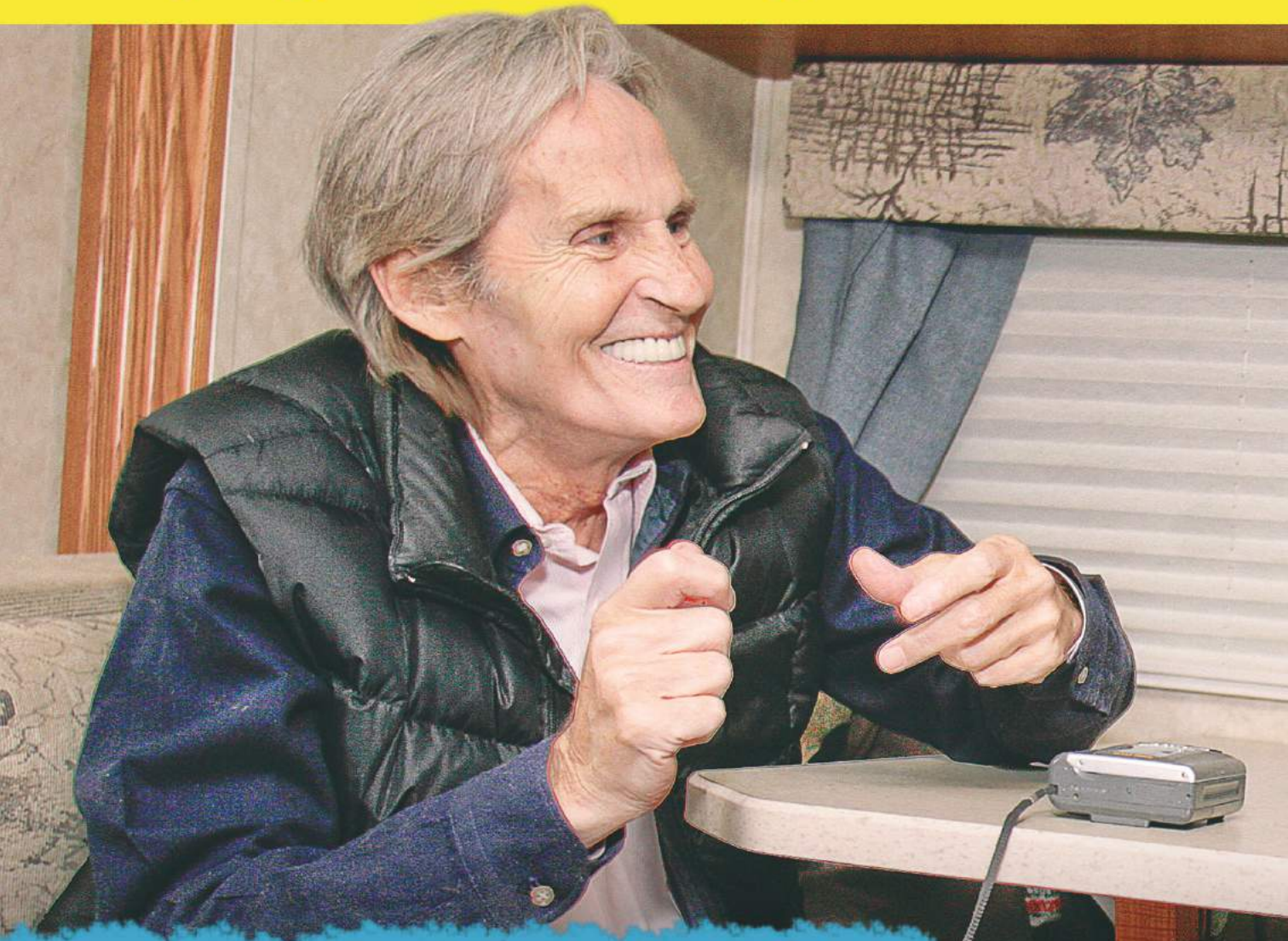
Playing For The Song—And More



Steve Jordan Interviews

THE GREAT LEVON HELM

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Paul La Raia

There are certain truisms that all drummers, regardless of style, adhere to, believe in, and espouse. Play good time, for one. Never overplay, of course. And always—*always*—play for the song. That last one can mean different things to different drummers. But if there ever was a drummer who undeniably embodied the concept of playing for the song, that drummer would have to be Levon Helm.

Perhaps the greatest singer/drummer to ever play a backbeat, Levon Helm has dedicated his entire career to playing for the song. Not only has Levon played and sung on some of the most legendary rock 'n' roll hits of all time, he stamped those songs with an indelible style and sense of swing, unerring groove, and musicality that's practically unparalleled (and these days, practically unheard).

Helm came to prominence first as a member of rockabilly legend Ronnie Hawkins' backup band, The Hawks, who a few years later accompanied Bob Dylan on his ascent through amplification. Levon finally became famous as the drummer, vocalist, and mandolin player for The Band, which The Hawks were renamed while supporting Dylan during his infamous Woodstock phase.

Lauded as an apparent reaction against the prog rock, psychedelic rock, and proto metal that seemed to dominate the music of the late '60s and early '70s, The Band reinvented rock 'n' roll, drawing on American roots music and injecting it with a serious dose of song craft and organic musicianship. Today, it can be hard to appreciate the massive impact The Band had on an entire generation of musicians. They inarguably influenced rock gods Eric Clapton and George Harrison to reevaluate their musical direction. They kick-started the genres of roots rock and country rock. And they gave stylistic birth to The Eagles, and even influenced The Beatles' *White Album*.

Seasoned road dogs well before the 1968 release of their debut album, Garth Hudson, Richard Manuel, Rick Danko, Robbie Robertson, and Levon Helm proceeded to score numerous top-20 hits, including "The Weight," "Up On Cripple Creek," "Rag Mama Rag," and "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down." After ten years, eight albums, and two decades of criss-crossing the world together, The Band called it quits. Their final concert, filmed for posterity by Martin Scorsese as *The Last Waltz*, is widely acknowledged to be one of the greatest concert films ever.

In The Band's wake, Levon staked a successful solo career, leading several all-star bands on albums like *Levon Helm And The RCO All Stars* (1977) and *American Son* (1980). As always, Levon's powerful vocals and Deep South drumming could be heard in the music's real rock 'n' roll grooves, his Arkansas roots and characteristically rustic drumming providing the link to another time, another era.

"I truly love to hear very accomplished and highly evolved drumming from those who are dedicated to pushing the envelope," says Jim Keltner, revered drummer with George Harrison, John Lennon, and Bob Dylan, among many others. "It's thrilling to hear and watch. But a great thing I've noticed is that, when asked about Levon, those drummers who've heard him play *all* say how much they love and appreciate what he does and how he does it."

Levon was diagnosed with cancer in 2000, but after a long recovery period, he returned, performing with his band at the now legendary Midnight Rambles. Held near Levon's home in Woodstock, the Rambles have played host to many musical stars and friends, including drummer/producer Steve Jordan, who *Modern Drummer* enlisted to interview Levon for this exclusive cover story.

Jordan, currently producing Los Lonely Boys and Solomon Burke, explains Levon's magic this way: "Levon plays the song. He was born with this beautiful rhythm. When you have a brilliant musician like Levon who has an inherent take on music—he's a great singer, he's a composer—with that combination you can't lose. His drumming is gorgeous, and his interpretation of the song is magnificent. He has that feel and he knows how to get that sound. I just love what emanates from the drums when he plays."

And with his new Grammy-nominated album, *Dirt Farmer*, bringing Levon's heartfelt vocals and cut-to-the-bone drumming to an entirely new audience, playing for the song—Levon Helm style—can be appreciated like never before.

"You have to play some good music to get people on the floor. I want to hear the meat. Until you can do that, it's suspect to me."

Steve: Even though we' ve been friends for a long time, it' s a real honor for me to have a chance to interview you.

Levon: We never planned on this! It' s my pleasure, Steve. I cherish our friendship—you know that.

Steve: You covered this topic in This Wheel' s On Fire [Helm' s 1993 autobiography], but would you talk a little bit about making music and listening to music with your family when you were growing up? It seems like your family was always listening to music.

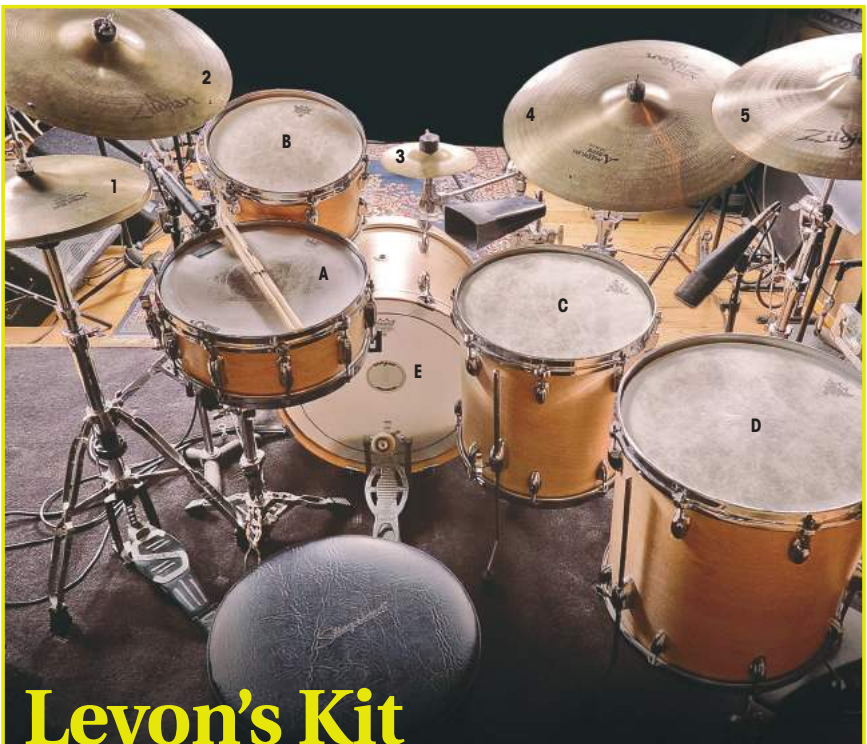
Levon: This is true. My childhood was in the ' 50s, and we were way out in the country in south Arkansas on a cotton farm. Electricity didn' t make it down our way until 1955 or ' 56. This was on that cusp between couch potatoes and the participation generation, which my parents were from. They were from that era when people would sing and recite poems for each other and tell stories.

Steve: A long time ago parents would go out and buy sheet music. Everybody in your family knew how to play the piano.

Levon: They would have house parties, pie suppers, and social gatherings. Most people don' t see a bonfire that often, but it' s a lot of fun to play around a big bonfire out in a big yard.

Steve: That seems to be one of the key things missing in the world today—that sense of community. Everyone is so into their own space.

Levon: They can dial in anything they can imagine. If they think about music, they can dial in Ray Charles, Mahalia Jackson, anything.



Levon's Kit

Drums: Slingerland in natural satin finish
- **A.** 6½x14 Radio King snare (wood)
- **B.** 8x12 rack tom
- **C.** 14x14 floor tom
- **D.** 16x16 floor tom
- **E.** 14x20 bass drum

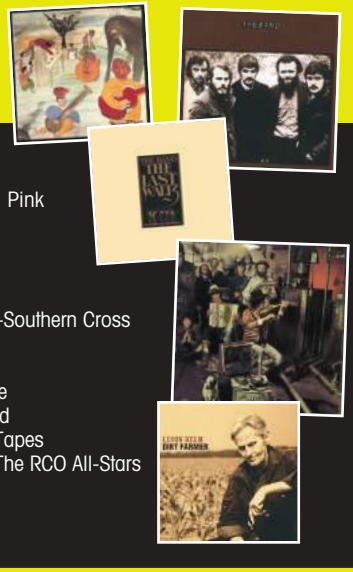
Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" A hi-hats
2. 17" A medium crash (with four rivets)
3. 10" A splash
4. 20" A medium ride (with three rivets)
5. 18" Armand thin crash

Percussion: Latin Percussion cowbell
Hardware: Slingerland stands, Yamaha bass drum pedal with felt beater (not in photo)
Heads: Remo coated CS (dot) on snare batter with Ambassador snare-side, Fiberskyn 3s on tops of toms with clear Ambassadors underneath, coated Pinstripe on bass drum with Slingerland logo head (single-ply) on front
Sticks: Pro-Mark Levon Helm signature model

Steve: And we' re glad that' s happening. But a lot of the times they don' t. [laughs]

Levon: A lot of times you take the spoon-fed stuff and end up robbing yourself. You might sing better than what you' re listening to!

Still Waltzing
Classic Levon On Record



RECORDINGS

ARTIST	ALBUM
The Band	Music From Big Pink
The Band	The Band
The Band	Stage Fright
The Band	Cahoots
The Band	Rock Of Ages
The Band	Northern Lights-Southern Cross
The Band	The Last Waltz
Ronnie Hawkins & The Hawks	Mr. Dynamo
Norah Jones	Feels Like Home
Bob Dylan	Before The Flood
Bob Dylan/The Band	The Basement Tapes
Levon Helm	Levon Helm & The RCO All-Stars
Levon Helm	American Son
Levon Helm	Dirt Farmer

Elvis And Dirt Farmer

Steve: You told me a story a long time ago, and it moved me so. Tell me about the first time you saw Elvis Presley.

Levon: It was an amazing show. Best as I can remember, it was with Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Narvel Felts, out of the Memphis area. They put on a show at the Catholic Club in Helena, Arkansas. Elvis came out with Bill Black and Scotty Moore, and the three of them with Elvis on guitar put on a hell of a show.

Then about three months later, after Elvis had played the Louisiana Hayride and he had copped D.J. Fontana, the house drummer, they played the high school gymnasium at Marianna, Arkansas. Now, man, it was total rock ' n' roll. The one that

Talking Drums With Levon

MD: Your drumming is always about the essence of what a song needs. What advice can you give to young drummers who want to follow that same path?

Levon: I would send them to the same well that I drank from. Go back and listen to Earl Palmer and WS Holland, who played with Carl Perkins. Also listen to Al Jackson, JM Van Eaton, and DJ Fontana. The way they and Earl Palmer did it on those Little Richard and Fats Domino songs is what you're talking about. There's no more and no less than what the song needs.

MD: What's your goal when you're playing a groove?

Levon: It's just the song, really. My job is to try to make it fun for all of us and keep it as steady as I can.

MD: Do you ever think about playing behind the beat or ahead of the beat?

Levon: Not a whole lot. Some songs just want to lay on the back end. That's a Memphis thing or a Southern thing, where you get there at the last possible moment. If the song will allow for that kind of a backbeat, it seems to feel better. It makes the music more danceable.

MD: When you were coming up, did you consciously try to develop your own style?

Levon: That may be a good way to go, but back then the school was that you had to imitate before you could possibly originate. You had to try to play like Earl Palmer and DJ Fontana and be able to bring exactly what the song needs. Anything more than that, you may be working on a great style, but you're doing the music a disservice.

MD: You always get a unique sound from your drums. What do you want to hear when you're tuning your drums?

Levon: I want to hear as much skin and stick as possible. I want to hear the wood of the stick. And I like to hear the wood of the drum shell. That's why wooden rims are so much fun. That wooden rim gives you more of a knock when you play rimshots.

A lot of the time I'll use a little tape on the head to take some of the metallic ring out of the drum. I have wooden hoops on a couple of the drums on the set we used on *Dirt Farmer*. We weren't going for the unplugged sound, but rather an un-electric sound.

MD: Where do you keep the tension on the drumhead?

Levon: Often I like the batter head a little bit looser. I keep the bottom head a little tighter. Let it supply the tone. Keep the top head on the dull side, the taped side.

MD: Do you always play with the butt end in the left hand?

Levon: I've always done that. Back in early times I used more of a traditional grip with my left hand. But the butt end gives you a stronger backbeat.

MD: In "Dirt Farmer," the meter is in three, but you move the snare drum accent around to where it doesn't *sound* like three. Why do that? It fools the ear.

Levon: It makes it more danceable, and you're able to put more of a 4/4 or 2/4 feel to the music. For the most part, you have to play the lyric of the song, so at times you need to phrase strictly with the lyric. After that, you can start dividing the music back into more of a 2 and 4 feel. And that keeps it from getting monotonous. Playing a straight snare drum accent would force everyone else to play it that way too.

MD: In the intro of "The Weight," you play two simple thwacks on the tom. No one else could have made that work, it's such a grand drum fill and really sets up the song. What's the essence of playing such a simple yet powerful tom fill?

Levon: I have to give credit to Tony May and Donnie Hahn, two of the best engineers at Phil Ramone's A&R studio in New York. They really worked with me to get that "weeping tom-tom sound," as one critic called it. Through trial and error I got the top and bottom heads in sequence with each other and had the top head so loose that by tightening two of the lugs opposite each other and creating one little band of tension across the whole head, you could hit it and the tone would dip. Then Tony and Donnie miked it correctly. If you have all that working for you, a little bit goes a long way.

MD: "Up On Cripple Creek"—that groove is like a shuffle, but it's not. It pops so hard.

Levon: It's probably a combination of everything that I grew up liking. It's got kind of a march feel in spots, and at the same time it's like a fatback shuffle. It's mainly as much fun as I can muster with the cowbells and the wooden rims.

At that time I was taking the tweaking time to make sure the rims and skins were right. The sound of each individual drum was worked on. The cowbell on that song was chosen from out of a whole lot of cowbells. It worked exactly right with those drums. That particular set of drums I found out in Santa Monica in a pawnshop. They were old Leedy Ludwig drums—bass drum, snare, two toms, and two cymbals for $160. Yes, sir!

MD: On "Life Is A Carnival," the accent in on beat 1, with those funky tom accents on 2 and 4. The beat is almost backwards.

Levon: It does get kind of angly-godly with itself. That was Rick Danko, Richard Manuel, and me doing the old trial & error, trying to play it in a different kind of way. It does fall in different spots.

MD: Thanks for speaking with us, Levon.

Levon: I want to thank *Modern Drummer* and Steve Jordan. He's one of the best friends I've got. And he's one of the best drummers I've ever heard in my life.

Through my whole illness, my phone had cobwebs on it—except for Steve. And every time he would do something, from the Rainforest Concerts to *Lightning In A Bottle*, he would ask me to play second chair drums. And it wasn't because he needed me, neither. It's because he's Steve Jordan. I love him for being that big-hearted.

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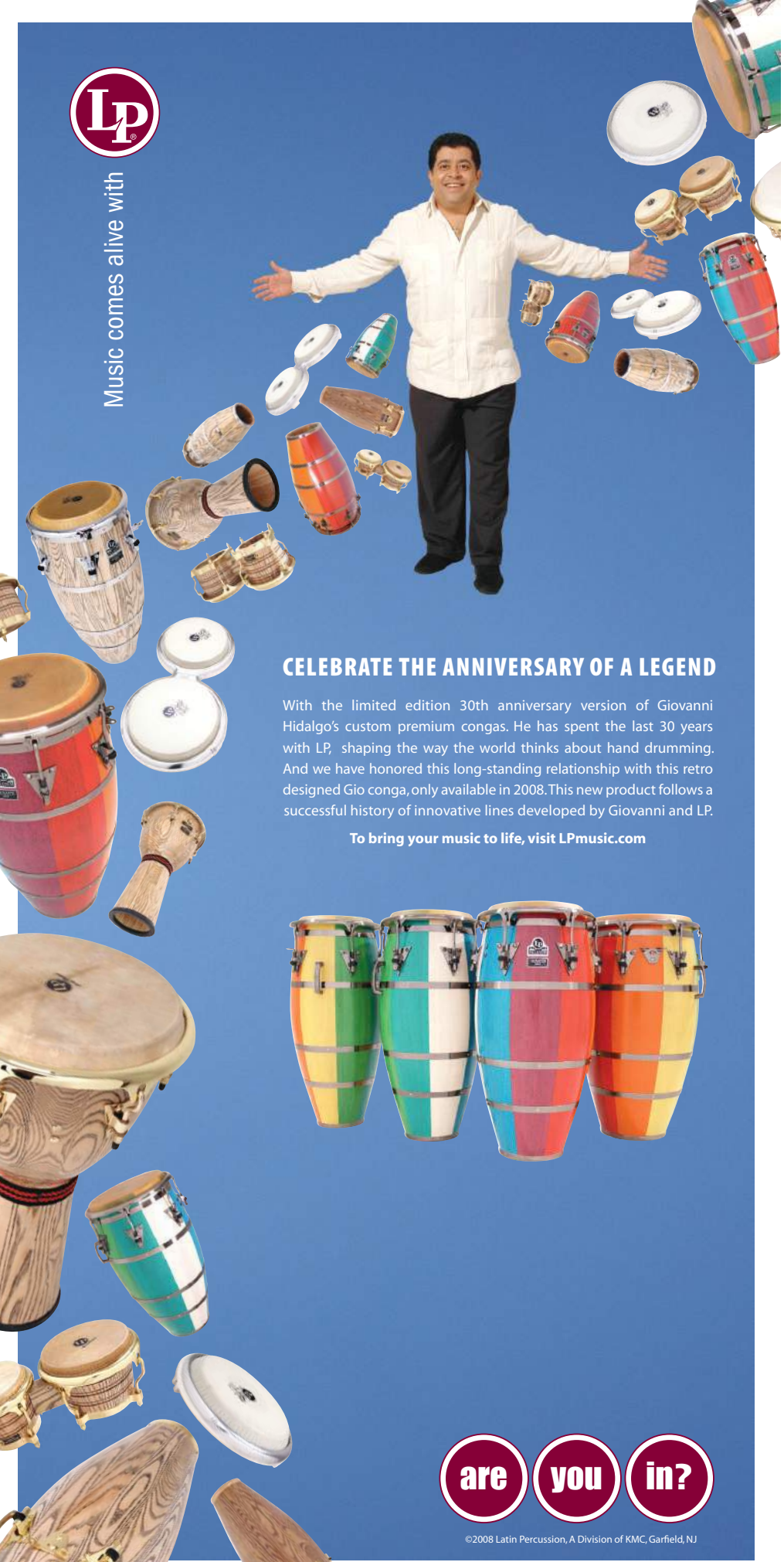

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LEVON HELM

brought the house down was " Money Honey." [Levon sings: " The landlord rang my front door bell, let it ring for a long, long spell. Went to the window and peeked through the blinds and asked him to tell me what was on his mind."] Then D.J. would put that triplicate on you: rat tat tat, rat tat tat, WHAM! People didn' t know what they were supposed to do or not do—they were up on their chairs. One of them kind of nights.

Steve: I love Dirt Farmer. It' s great to hear you in the studio again. You really get the sense of the music that you grew up listening to and what really moves you. Like on " Blind Child."

Levon: There' s another one, " A Letter To Tom." And there' s " Little Birds" and " The Girl I Left Behind." Those were the songs my parents and their friends would sing and play for each other as they were growing up. Those tunes had to be old when they heard them.

Steve: You mentioned " The Girl I Left Behind." Great groove on that.

Levon: That' s my daughter Amy playing drums.

Steve: Whew! Amy, go girl! The album credits don' t specify where she' s playing drums. That is a fantastic groove.

Levon: That' s the first one we cut. We started on the old songs. Those were my first understandings about harmony too, hearing my sister, mother, and dad sing those different parts.

Steve: " Calvary." Beautiful, beautiful song.

Levon: That' s by Byron Isaacs, who played bass on the album. Byron is one of those young music-makers coming up. He just loves it so much that he does it right 90% of the time. On Dirt Farmer he used that straight doghouse [upright] bass on everything. We didn' t use an electric anywhere on the whole album. We used a full kit so the rhythm section would be rock ' n' roll. But there are no electrical things there.

Singing And Drumming

Steve: One of the unique things about you musically is the independence between your vocals and your drumming. A lot of drummers who sing kind of go with how they play. There are a lot of great drummers who sing, like Don Henley, Phil Collins, the drummer for Rare Earth [Pete Rivera], and Walter " Clyde" Orange, The Commodores' drummer who sang " Brick House."

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Levon: And the Holmes Brothers' Popsy Dixon.

Steve: A whole lot of them. But the thing that you do that nobody else does is you sing completely independent of your drumming. Your phrasing and everything are like two completely different people. You actually lead more than any other singer/drummer, but your pulse is also driving the band in a completely different way. When you played with The Band, for instance, you had control of that groove. But your vocals were completely independent and you were driving the top and the bottom. How did you start playing and singing?

Levon: With The Hawks, with Ronnie Hawkins, they would always pass the microphone around. I would sing two or three songs every night. Ronnie wanted everyone to participate that way. And by the time we started doing it as The Band, I was trying to sing the middle part, sing the tonic of the song, because Richard Manuel and Rick Danko could do all them wonderful harmonies. You couldn't tell when Richard was going from natural voice into falsetto, he would go so high. And Rick could sing in many different places.

For me, it was just a reflection of the drum, to try and sing the middle part, the tonic part of the song. Make it as flexible but as strong as possible, to hold the harmonies so you could have something to hang on to.

Steve: The tonic a lot of the time ends up being the melody…

Levon: ..and play the downbeat and the backbeat with it. And try to sing off those two beats mainly.

Steve: It doesn't sound like it's being framed within the beat. It sounds like you're a completely different person.

Levon: What I like to do is, if the song is in a street-beat kind of a feel—pretty much a straight-8th thing—I'll sing in more of a shuffle rhythm. Then you get the two rubbing against each other.

Steve: Now that's rock 'n' roll. The shuffle against the straight 8th is the key to rock 'n' roll.

Levon: That's what Earl [Palmer] taught us. He would do it in the same song. He would play the shuffle and the straight 8th. I kind of copied from Earl, I'm sure. And just to sing in that place and hold down the rhythm section—get in that right place and then bounce on top of it.

Steve: You do it with your vocal. That's amazing. When Earl did it with Little Richard, he was a jazz drummer. Same thing with Fred Below with Willie Dixon, who also ended up doing that with Chuck Berry. There ya go: dotted 8th gets the straight 8th.

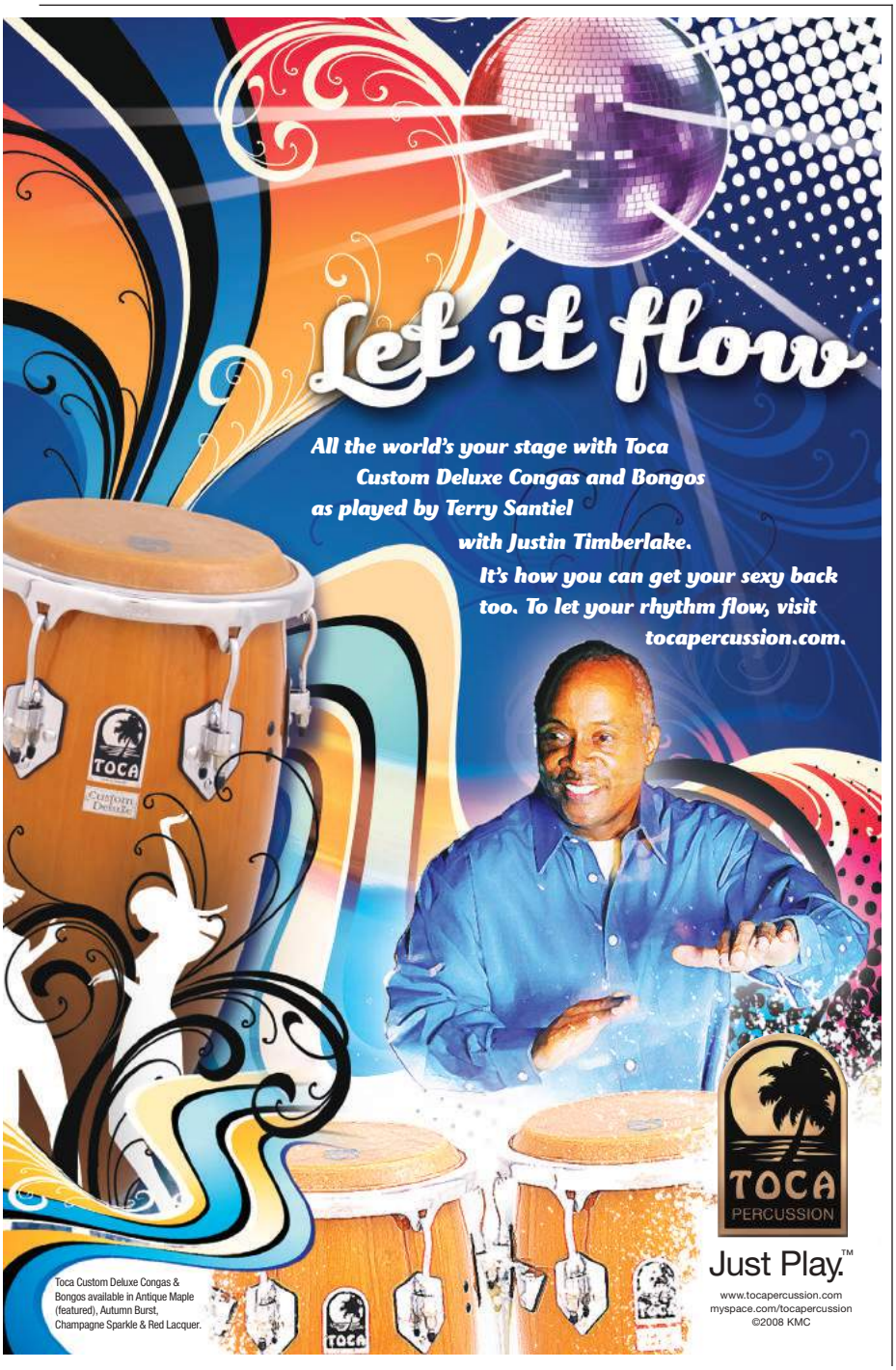
Levon: That was pretty much the rhythm section, Fred Below and Willie Dixon and Chuck Berry.

Steve: When Below started playing at Chess in that blues rhythm section, you'd have Eddie Taylor and Willie Dixon. And then Chuck would come in, and all of a sudden it was a new sound. Pretty remarkable.

Levon: And the way Johnnie Johnson tied those grooves together.

Steve: And Otis Spann, he got that out of Sunnyland Slim.

Levon: Osmosis.



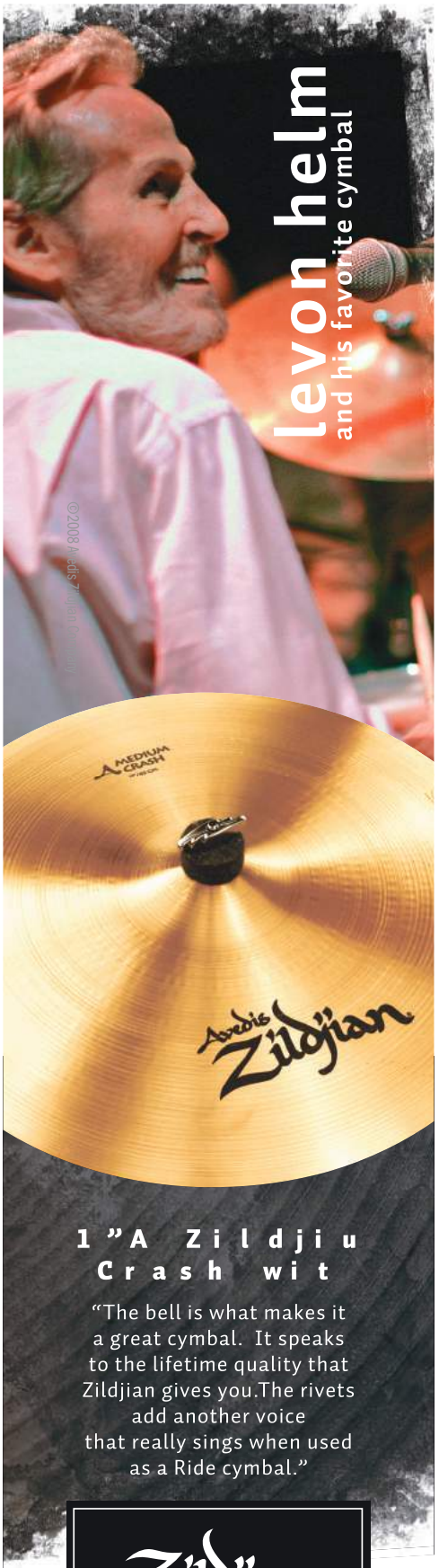
The Keltner Connection

Jim Keltner's unique drumming has created the bottom end on a zillion classic recordings, from titles by John Lennon, George Harrison, and The Traveling Wilburys to Steely Dan and Bob Dylan. Keltner is also one of the biggest Levon Helm fans around. Who better to ask, then, about what makes a fellow drummer a true master of the instrument?

"When I met Levon, I'd only recently gotten into rock music. I'd been purely a jazz player, and it was important for me to keep up my chops, which I'd worked on so hard. Then I heard Levon on *Music From Big Pink* by The Band. The music was gigantic, unreal, and the voices were so powerful, such as on 'The Weight,' with that great wobbly groove, the beautiful, honest sound, and the suspense in his perfectly imperfect drum fills. Not to mention, it's got one of the greatest vocals by anybody, ever. And then later, 'The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down'…still makes me cry when I hear it—and I'm not even from the South. That beautiful feel, those stately fills, and the snare roll that makes you hold your breath. And the most amazingly soulful singing. He certainly changed my whole way of thinking about music.

"That beautiful feel, those stately fills, and the snare roll that makes you hold your breath. Levon certainly changed my whole way of thinking about music."

"As far as his style is concerned, I believe Levon is closest to a Chicago blues drummer from the '40s or '50s. Applied to the pop music The Band was making at the time, it was thrilling and unique. Levon has a way of knowing when to play deep and when to play high, and that's key—melodic drumming. That will never change, no matter what kind of music you're playing. I've always felt that Levon plays drums like he talks—not too loud, not in any particular kind of hurry, able to get to the heart of the matter in a deceptively simple way. And I swear his drums have a real Arkansas drawl."



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Levon And The Band

Steve: Let' s talk about your musical brother, bassist Rick Danko. What was he like to play with?

Levon: Rick was a lot of fun to play with. For the most part he used that fretless Ampeg bass. It was an electric lap-style bass and it had the best of both worlds—that fretless neck had a standup feel. Rick wasn' t what you would call a regulation kind of a bass player at all. He almost played in a bass/guitar style at times. At the same time he was very conscious of the harmonies and the vocals and how they were going to lay. He always made sure to really support the vocals.

Steve: That was the thing about that whole band, really, how you guys could play a song perfectly. You never overshadowed the song. You brought stuff to the song that probably didn' t exist originally. In The Band it sounds like the lead singer had to have at least co-written the songs. There are people who interpret songs, like Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Joe Williams, Ella Fitzgerald—they make the songs their own. But what was the process when a song was introduced to The Band? How did you make it sound like you wrote the song? Take us through " Up On Cripple Creek," for instance.

Levon: " Cripple Creek" was another of those

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tunes that had to grow itself. We would get an idea for a song, a title, maybe a punch line, sometimes an idea. Richard would say, " If we just know what it' s about…" That was really our whole process, and for me to try and sing as good as Richard. He was our lead singer for the most part. We would swap the vocal around and find out who could really sing the tune, and at the same time grow the song out. The parts that we didn' t like, the parts that didn' t entertain, we would change.

We had a basic formula for most of our tunes. We would want to have those participation kind of songs, so that when we got to the chorus the listener is helping us out. We swapped the vocals around so much, by the time we' d record them we knew what voice worked. After a while it got so you couldn' t hardly tell one of us from the other.

Steve: It sounds like you were doing that as players as well. When Richard would play the drums—what the heck was that all about? [laughs]

Levon: Richard was just a natural rhythm section guy. He could carry with his left just as good as he could with his right. For two or three songs, we would all swap around. Rick could go to fiddle, Garth would play the bass with the organ pedals, Richard would go to drums. On " Rag Mama Rag," he just tore it up—and clean as a pen, too. Not sloppy. Well, sloppy, but not sloppy.

Steve: When you started playing with Bob Dylan, what was that like? Having experienced that myself….

Levon: For me, that was alright, but he couldn' t sing as good as Richard did. I was as interested in what we were going to try to do as I was in what he was going to do. I liked playing with Bob, and

LEVON HELM

he' s a hell of a guy. But the Dylan fans booed the hell out of us. As soon as they saw that red Gretsch kit roll out on the stage [laughs], they would boo. It got hard to live with for me. The show got old to me real quick.

Steve: The whole folk movement was supposed to be about tolerance and coming together. But like the song " If I Had A Hammer," if they had a hammer they would have taken it to your drums. [laughs] It says a lot about this society.

Levon: It' s the most dishonest world it' s ever been. Greed and dishonesty is at an all-time high. It' s a rich man' s war and a poor man' s fight. Never been more true than today. If you don' t really search out and dial in, you' ll get that spoon-fed stuff and you' ll miss somebody until all of a sudden they' re real popular.

Steve: Because the arts have become so corporate and things are dying quickly, it' s up to the musicians to actually come up with new ways to get their music out. Obviously there are some negative

Richie Hayward

Double Drumming With The Man

When a re-formed version of The Band played LA in the 1990s, Little Feat's mighty drummer Richie Hayward would often sit in. Hayward even double-drummed with Levon on occasion. Thirty years on, with Little Feat still going strong (new album due this spring), Hayward's memories of Levon Helm remain fresh.

"I think he's one of the purest musicians I've ever met."

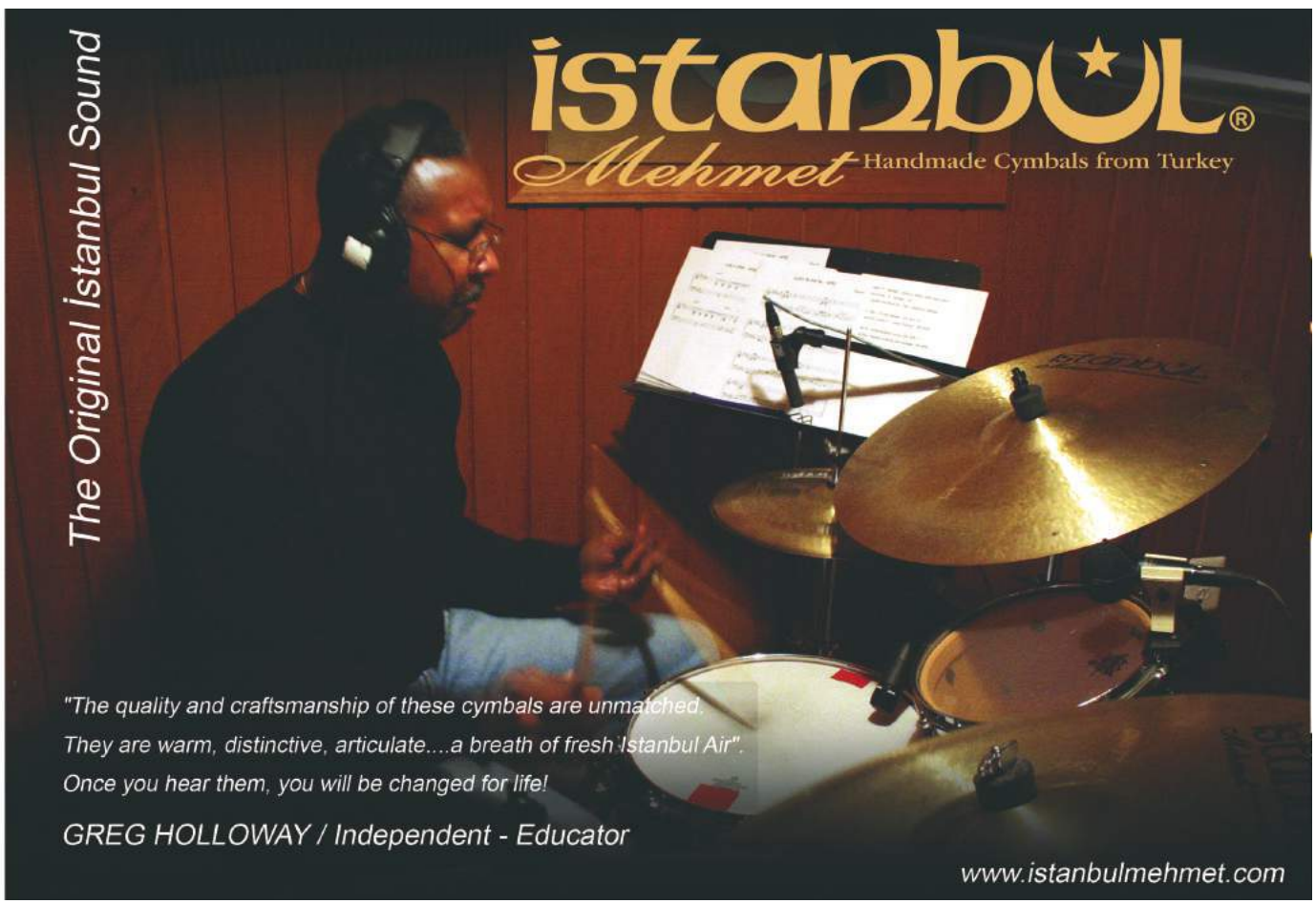
"Whenever The Band came to town, they'd give me a call and I'd go down and play with them. It felt wonderful, one of my dreams come true. It was just playing real American music. I definitely laid back more when doing that. Levon's groove is just behind the middle. It makes everything real comfortable.

"Levon's upbringing is what makes him such a special drummer. He was born in Turkey Scratch, Arkansas, and he comes from an era when the music was still really pure down there. I think he's one of the purest musicians I've ever met. He doesn't try to be anything other than who he is. And that's enough.

"My favorite track of Levon's is 'The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down.' It's such a beautiful song, and the drums are exactly what they should be. That's one of the hardest things to do: play it simple but keep it interesting and keep it working. Levon's thing was largely the sound of his drums and the feel he put across. He always played vintage drums back then.

"What could some kid who likes Slipknot learn from Levon? Take off the mask. Just play the music. It doesn't have to be fast to be good. In fact, it's a lot better if it's not. When Levon plays, it's not about chops, it's about exactly what's needed in the song. He's coming from the other end of the stick rather than how many fast licks he can put in the song.

"What does the song really need? That's the big question. Levon is a master of what to play; he's almost Zen in that way. He's less-is-more to the point where that *is* the point."



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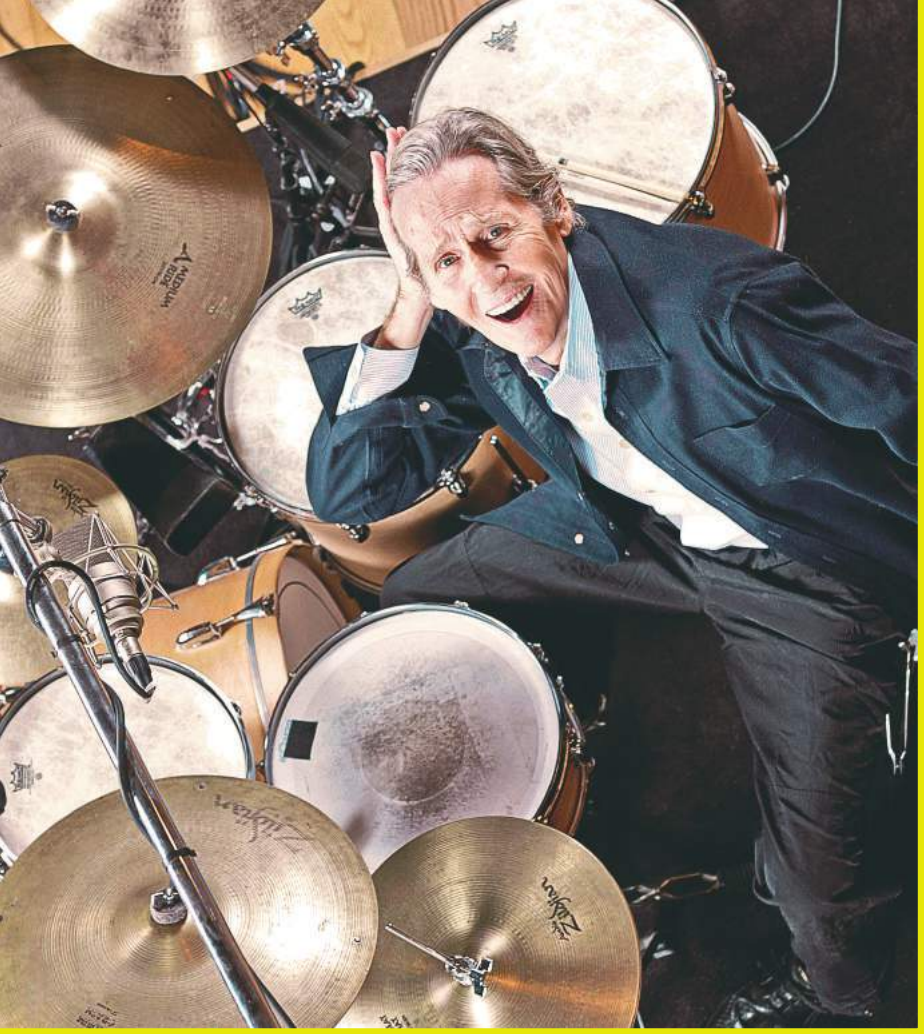

aspects about it, but it' s made artists work harder and become more imaginative to get their work to the people. That' s as opposed to pipedreams like American Idol, where you wait to get some massive contract. That' s not real.

Levon: There' s no dues paying, no struggle, no process.

Steve: The process is so important. Maybe some people get lucky and they don' t suffer as much. But the process is still important. You can' t skip stages to get there.

Levon: Ronnie Hawkins used to say to us, " You can' t originate until you can imitate." It' s true. If you can' t play a three-hour dance, your music ain' t going to be as solid as it should be. You have to play some good music to get the people on the floor. Until you can do that, it' s suspect to me. I want to hear the meat. It' s too flimsy and dishonest.

Levon And The Rock ' N' Roll Link

Steve: Did you listen to Big Sid Catlett? He did a lot of Joe Turner records, like " Shake Rattle And Roll."

Levon: You bet. Back in the early times when I was a kid, Peck Curtis was my main man. I would go to radio station KFFA in Helena, Arkansas, and I' d watch that broadcast and

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study Peck. He played with the King Biscuit Boys and Sonny Boy Williamson. Later on when I got the job playing with Ronnie Hawkins, Peck loaned me his drums a couple times. We played at the Delta Supper Club in west Helena.

Steve: Who were your other influences?

Levon: I didn' t always know the drummer' s names. But I always admired Tony Scott' s band that played down at Duke Peacock Records in Texas. They were the house band for all of Junior Parker and Bobby Blue Bland' s tracks.

Steve: By 1960, Jabo Starks was playing with Bobby Blue Bland. He cut " Turn On Your Love Light."

Levon: I got to watch them cut that.

Steve: What?

Levon: I watched them record that at Bradley Studios in Nashville.

Steve: Get out of here!

Levon: Roulette Records sent Hawkins down to Bradley Studios in Nashville to record Ronnie Hawkins Sings The Songs Of Hank Williams. We were upstairs in studio B, and downstairs in studio A was Bobby Blue Bland and The Tony Scott Orchestra. Jabo was playing drums and they cut " Love Light."

Steve: That is incredible.

Levon: I was running downstairs to watch and listen. They recorded it and Tony Scott said, " Now Jabo, when we get to that letter C, you got to give me something." [laughs] They did it again, and baby that' s when he gave him something, right then.

Steve: Incredible. That was 1960. That' s the link. You were there for the bridge. After that, when James Brown heard him, he took Jabo. And that' s how we got to this other thing. From that record.

Levon: The first time I ever saw two drummers was the Alan Freed Big Beat show at the Brooklyn Fox Theater. The drummers would rarely play together, except for endings. One would play mallets.

Steve: Hearing about this from you is worth this whole thing, driving up here and being left off in front of a funeral home parking lot. [laughs] [Editor' s note: this interview took place in Levon' s RV, parked down the street from a Yonkers, New York venue at which he would perform that night.]

Levon' s Recovery

Steve: During your illness, a lot of people were praying for you. You lived through some serious stuff, and you' ve come out on top. What has changed in your playing and your singing?

Levon: It' s just more fun to me now. It' s more of a celebration. There' s a joy that you can' t find doing anything else. I used to take it for granted that I would be playing somewhere next week, so tonight wasn' t that important. Now everynight is real important. I think that' s how you build yourself back, trying to be better than last night. And stay honest with yourself and keep playing.

Steve: I was witness to you starting to sing again at the first Ramble. To have the gift of your voice come back through the grace of God is something we are grateful for.

Levon: God bless you for saying that. It' s the power of prayer and music and all of that mixed together. Wonderful things can happen. Miracles can happen.

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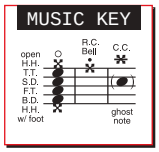
Levon Helm's

Greatest Grooves With The Band

by Ed Breckenfeld



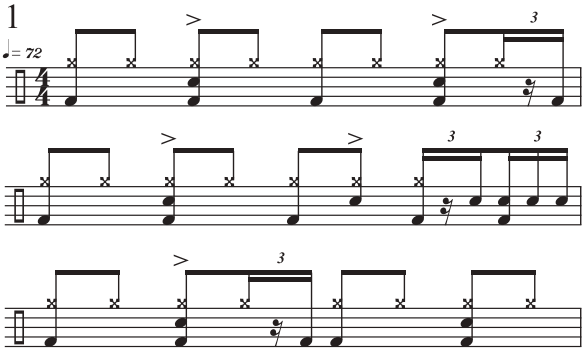
Levon Helm is the quintessential American drummer. Combining a musical upbringing in the melting pot of the Mid-South with years of dues-paying road work, Levon's playing distills the country's major indigenous music styles—blues, country, jazz, and rock 'n' roll.

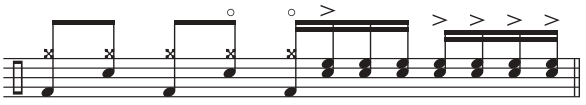
Levon also mixes in deep musical sensitivity that he developed as a soulful vocalist. All of this gives him a unique perspective that few drummers share. Though most often appreciated as a "feel" player, the examples in this article reveal Helm's strong technique and control. What follows is a sampling of some of his best grooves and licks from the early years of his legendary group, The Band.

"The Weight"

Music From Big Pink (1968)

The Band's first album was born out of sessions with legendary songwriter Bob Dylan (released later as The Basement Tapes) that took place in a rented pink house in Woodstock, New York. With a label deal to record their own music, The Band created a landmark ode to Americana. The results sounded like nothing else that was around at the time. Levon Helm, memorably described by producer John Simon as "a bayou folk drummer," conjured up strong imagery both with his voice and with his playing. The drummer's offbeat snare beats and fills add a lilting energy to the slow pace of this classic song. (3:47)

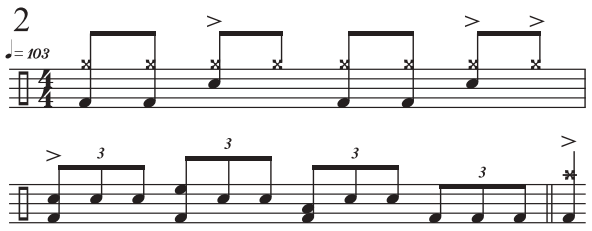




"Chest Fever"

Music From Big Pink

The fill at the end of Garth Hudson's long organ solo in this track is a prime example of Helm's sympathetic rhythmic sense. As Garth uses descending chords to wrap up his solo, Levon's triplets work their way down to his bass drum. This pushes the breaks on the solo section before returning to the intro. (3:34)



"I Shall Be Released"

Music From Big Pink

Levon's delicate snare work highlights the first verse of The Band's take on this famous Bob Dylan song. The rolls in this groove were achieved by Helm turning his snare drum upside down and gently running his fingers across the snare wires. (0:29)

"Across The Great Divide"

The Band (1969)

The self-titled second release from The Band was a high-water mark that solidified the quintet as one of the best ensembles in North America. Continuing in a rootsy vein similar to the first album, The Band is filled with timeless songs and wonderful performances. And Levon's quirky drumming is pushed further up front in the mix. The following reoccurring fill from the opening

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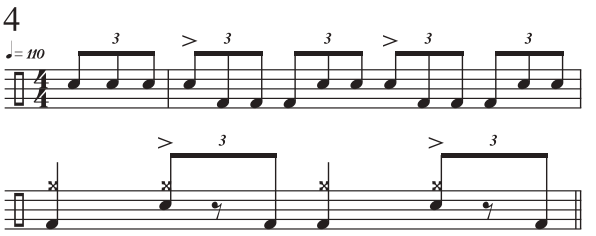
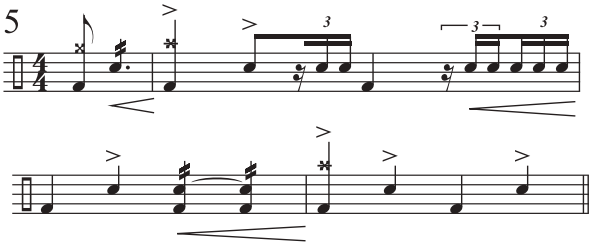
track demonstrates the drummer' s ability to incorporate the bass drum into his ideas. (0:53)



" The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down"

The Band

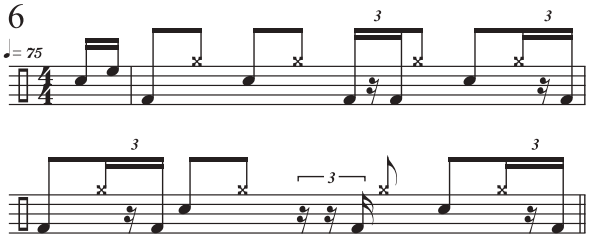
Levon' s press-roll crescendos in this famous tune set up the chorus hook perfectly, while simultaneously evoking the feel of the Civil War–era subject matter. (0:32)



" When You Awake"

The Band

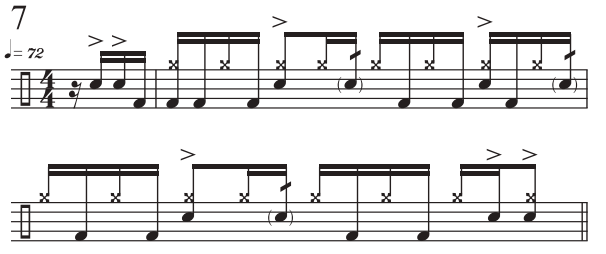
The combination of Helm' s offbeat hi-hat pattern over a swung bass drum part gives the chorus of this track an enticing groove. The sound of the snare drum with the snares turned off contributes to the song' s " down home" flavor. (0:29)



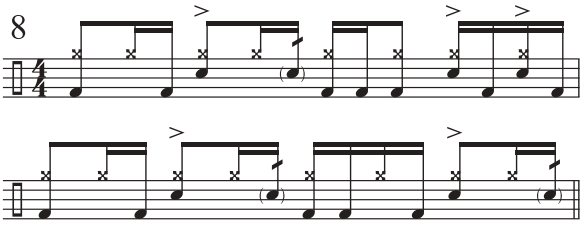
" Up On Cripple Creek"

The Band

Here' s the intro beat from this classic tune. Rick Danko and Robbie Robertson provide a minimalist bass and guitar riff, leaving Levon' s head-bobbing groove to foreshadow what' s to come. Notice how Helm avoids the downbeats in most of his bass drum parts, adding to the funkiness of the pattern. (0:00)



Never one to get locked in to a single pattern, Levon improvises some cool bass and snare combinations in the song' s later verses. (2:34)



" Look Out Cleveland"

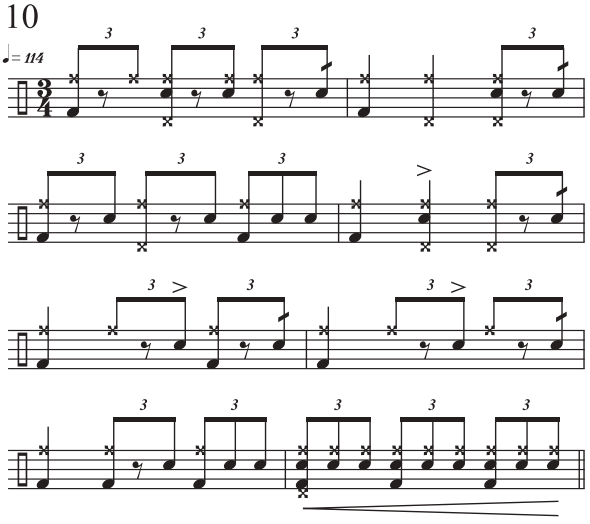
The Band

According to Levon' s autobiography, This Wheel' s On Fire, The Band was making a conscious effort on their second album to employ half-time grooves, which led to different lyric placement and more danceable feels. This track is a prime example. Helm' s driving 16th-note ride and syncopated kick pattern are high-energy, while the half-time effect of the snare backbeat delivers a deep pocket. (0:09)

" Sleeping"

Stage Fright (1970)

The third album from The Band moved away from the storytelling imagery of the first two records towards darker, more personal themes dealing with the pressures of success. Todd Rundgren' s engineering gave greater clarity to Levon' s drum sound, bringing out the subtleties in his cymbal and snare work. A good example is in his jazz-waltz groove for the choruses of this song. (0:59)



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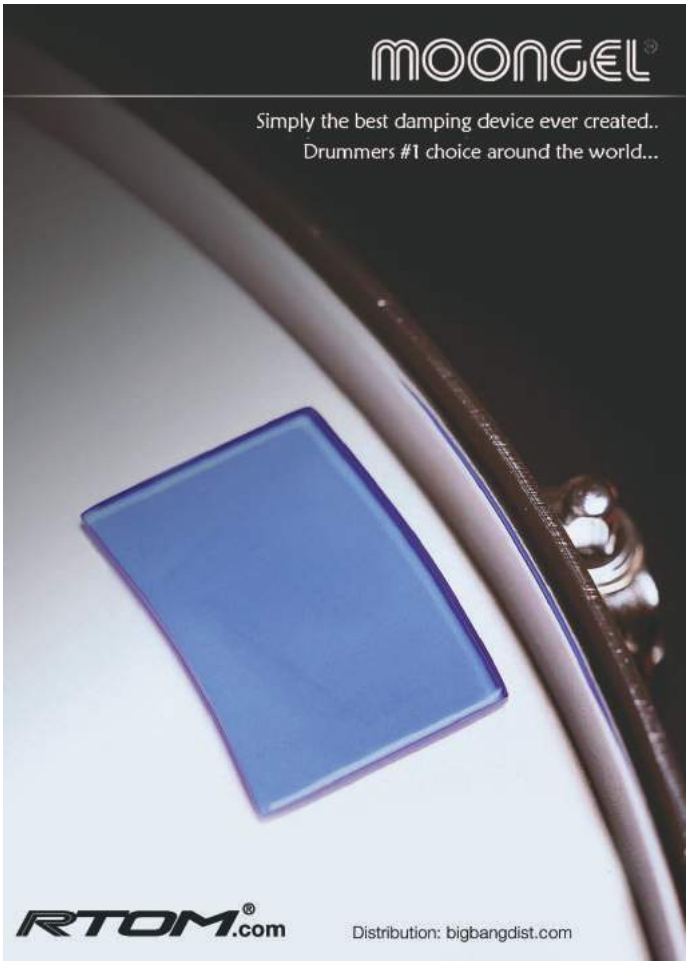


LEVON GROOVES

"Stage Fright"

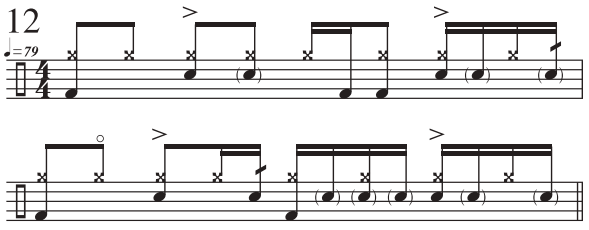
Stage Fright

The album's title track features some unique cymbal playing from Helm. Bouncing from straight quarter notes to syncopated 16th-note rhythms, he keeps the song off balance until locking to a straight beat in the choruses. In this intro sequence, notice how the drummer shifts the syncopation from the cymbal to the kick drum. (0:26)

"Acadian Driftwood"

Northern Lights—Southern Cross (1975)

In this beautiful ballad, Levon moves things along with some of his finest ghost-note snare work. It's subtle, but incredibly effective. (1:45)



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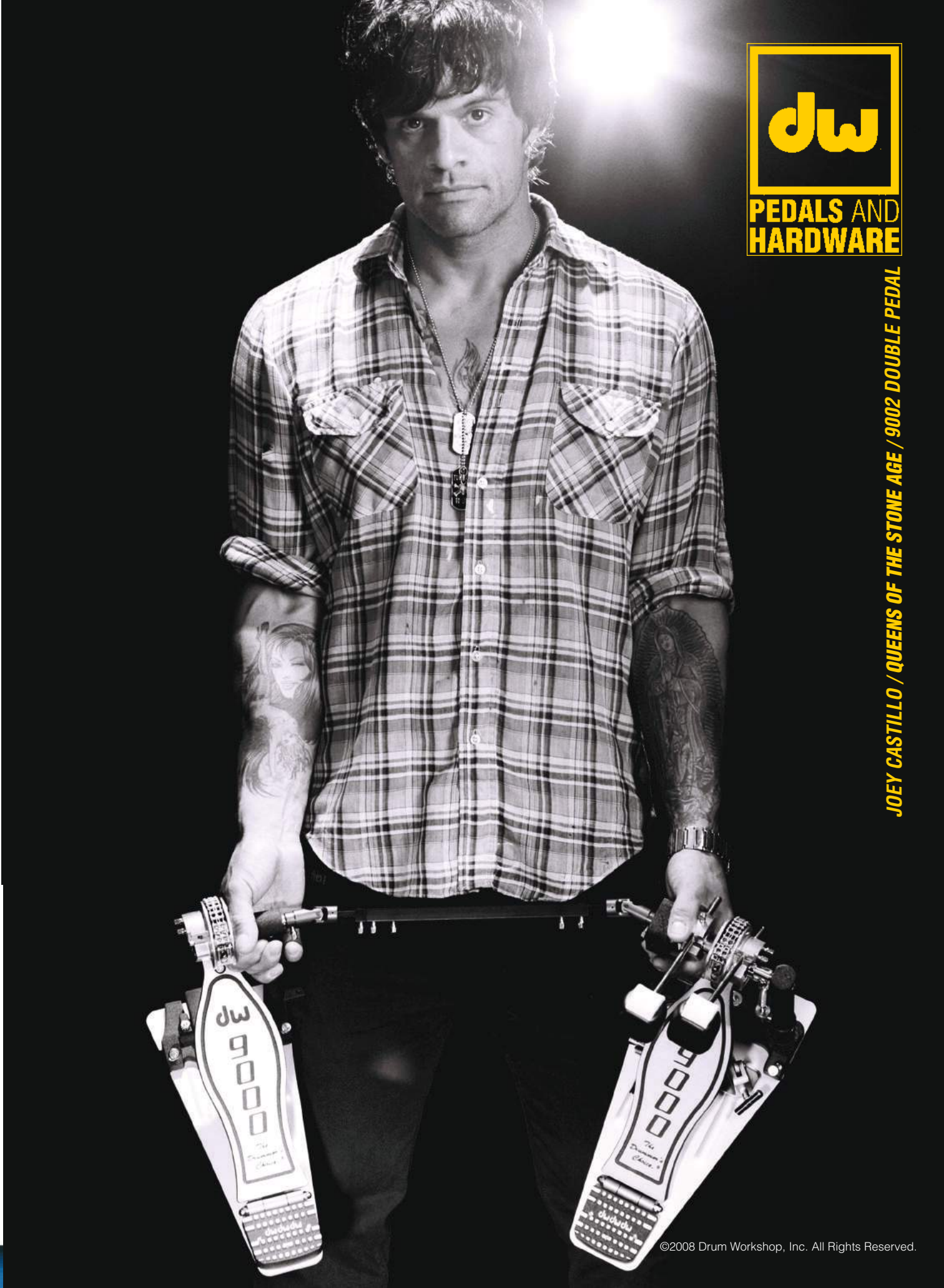

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Hosted by Stephen Perkins and featuring performances by the Street Drum Corps with special guests Adrian Young, Brooks Wackerman, Shannon Leto, John Sawicki and Byron McMackin as well as Go Get A Late Pass!!! featuring ?uestlove and a headlining set by Angels & Airwaves, the event was a night drummers will not soon forget.

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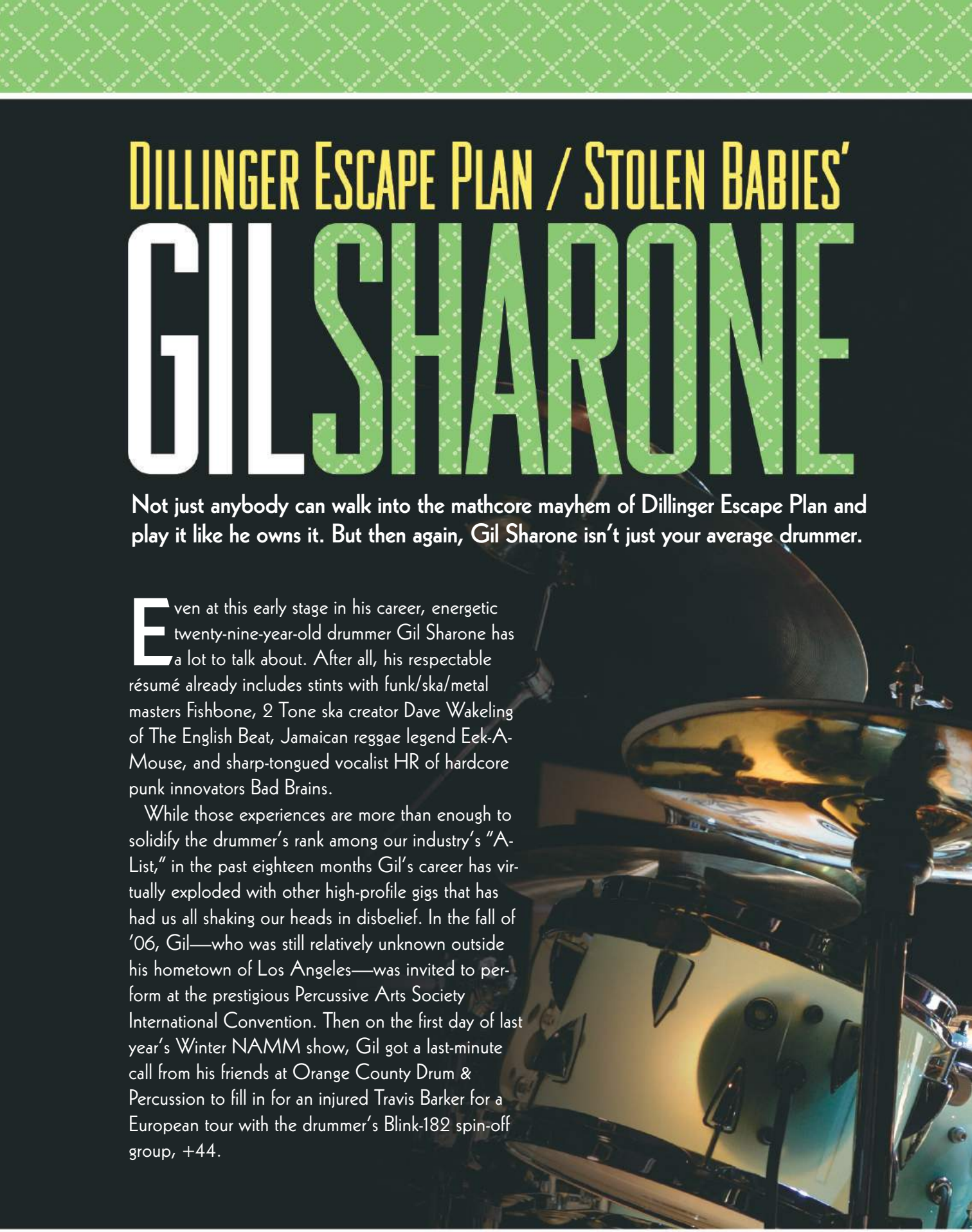
Dillinger Escape Plan / Stolen Babies'

Gil Sharone

Not just anybody can walk into the mathcore mayhem of Dillinger Escape Plan and play it like he owns it. But then again, Gil Sharone isn't just your average drummer.



Even at this early stage in his career, energetic twenty-nine-year-old drummer Gil Sharone has a lot to talk about. After all, his respectable résumé already includes stints with funk/ska/metal masters Fishbone, 2 Tone ska creator Dave Wakeling of The English Beat, Jamaican reggae legend Eek-A-Mouse, and sharp-tongued vocalist HR of hardcore punk innovators Bad Brains.

While those experiences are more than enough to solidify the drummer's rank among our industry's "A-List," in the past eighteen months Gil's career has virtually exploded with other high-profile gigs that has had us all shaking our heads in disbelief. In the fall of '06, Gil—who was still relatively unknown outside his hometown of Los Angeles—was invited to perform at the prestigious Percussive Arts Society International Convention. Then on the first day of last year's Winter NAMM show, Gil got a last-minute call from his friends at Orange County Drum & Percussion to fill in for an injured Travis Barker for a European tour with the drummer's Blink-182 spin-off group, +44.

story by Michael Dawson
photos by Alex Solca

Soon after returning to Los Angeles from that incredible experience, Gil was greeted with not one, but *two* emails offering other once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. "I was checking my MySpace page and I got an email from Dillinger Escape Plan wanting to know if I'd be interested in joining them," Gil recalls. "Apparently, Chris Pennie was leaving the band and Chris Hornbrook of Poison The Well recommended that they contact me. It was a pretty overwhelming email. Then the same day that they offered me that, my brother yelled down from upstairs, 'Dude, we just got asked to record with Maynard from Tool!' I was like, 'What's going on here? Did I win the lottery?'" And all of this went down just four weeks before the drummer was scheduled to hit the road with his genre-blending theatrical metal band Stolen Babies in support of modern rock mavens Lacuna Coil.

As you can see, there's a lot going on in the world of Gil Sharone. So rather than try to tackle everything at once, we decided to meet up with the drummer at Dillinger's rehearsal space in New Jersey (yeah, he took the gig), to begin with a firsthand account on what it's like learning, recording, and performing the ridiculously demanding material from the progressive hardcore pioneers' latest release, *Ire Works*.

MD: You came into Dillinger right before the recording of Ire Works, right?
Gil: Yeah. About ninety percent of the record was already written, because they had plans of doing it with Chris Pennie. They originally wanted me for the tour. But when I called Greg [Puciato, Dillinger's vocalist] back the next day, he said that in a matter of those eight hours everything had shifted. Now Chris wasn't going to be playing on the record. That was when this opportunity made much more sense. Doing the tour, I would've just been playing somebody else's stuff. But this was an opportunity for me to be recorded with Dillinger.
MD: It had to be challenging preparing for a record when you're in Los Angeles and they're on the east coast.
Gil: Yeah. I was on my own with the material. At first they sent me some songs with programmed drums. One of those was "Lurch." They were like, "Let us know if you can play this, and we'll take it from there." I heard it twice, and it started to make sense. So I called them back and said, "Yeah, I can do that. I need to learn it. But physically I can do it."
MD: How long did it take to learn the material?
Gil: It usually didn't take more than a week for the songs to get in me. But the more intricate and complex stuff required some extra attention. So I charted some of those things out.
MD: Since you joined the band at the last minute, and you were about to head out on tour with your band Stolen Babies, you couldn't have had a ton of time to learn the material.
Gil: I was home for four weeks before I left for the tour. So I had that time to spend with whatever songs they could send to me. I had "Lurch," "Fix Your Face," and "Party Smashers." The rest I had to learn while I was on the road. Basically, I would get back to the hotel at three in the morning after a Stolen Babies show and listen to Dillinger's stuff for an hour or so. Then at soundcheck the next day, all I did was shed Dillinger grooves. [laughs]
MD: Were you learning exactly what was programmed on the demos?
Gil: Pretty much. The songs were already very structured, but I wanted them to be my own. So I added things whereever I could. But most of the time, certain rhythmic patterns are the songs. So whether it was Chris, a machine, or me, it was going to be played the same basic way.
MD: Had you met the rest of the band prior to the recording sessions?
Gil: No. The first time that I met everybody else was when I got to the rehearsal studio three days before the recording. Everybody was skeptical until the first note. We started with "Fix Your Face," and everyone was floored. The energy in the room, the performance, and the chemistry was like I'd played with these guys all my life. That was when all doubt was gone.
MD: Did you have all of the tracks prepared by that point?
Gil: At that time, I didn't have all the songs. So we had to work some things out on the spot. One of those was "Horse Hunter."
MD: How was that song presented to you?
Gil: I got a rough guitar guide with a rough sequence of drums. Ben [Weinman, Dillinger's guitarist] encour-

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4. 12" Oriental China stacked on top of 12" K prototype
5. 20" K Custom ride
6. 22" prototype crash/ride
7. 19" K China

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"**THE BASS DRUM** was what sold me on acrylic," insists Gil. "OCDP loaned me a 20x22 acrylic drum when I was rehearsing with Dillinger. A couple of the guys were standing in front of me when I kicked it for the first time after swapping it with my wood-shelled bass drum. And they went, 'Holy crap! Is there a microphone in that?' I've never heard a wood drum sound that big and punchy."

aged my input, so I started to work things out. I gave him different variations that incorporated double bass and other rhythmic patterns based off the guitar. Then when we got to that half-time part, I played fills where each one has its own personality. The first one is a fast tom run, the second one is a big Melvins-y thing, the third one had some swing to it, and the last one is a big Dave Lombardo–type fill.

There' s also a part in this song that' s six against seven. But we don' t consciously go for those things. Even though people talk about this band as math-metal, those time changes come organically from the phrase.

MD: So it' s more about the shape of the line, rather than how the measures break down.

Gil: Yeah. Certain things involve counting, because it helps me understand it better. But I' m going to do whatever' s easiest. If I can hear something better by counting, then I' ll think of it that way. But if it' s more natural to sing the phrase, then I' ll do that.

MD: Were you a fan of the band before you joined?

Gil: Totally. My twin brother, Rani, got me into them about ten years ago. I thought they were amazing, but I didn' t sit there and analyze them. I just listened and absorbed their music like I would with anything else I was into.

MD: You never tried to play along to it?

Gil: No. Stylistically I was in a different place. I wasn' t playing double bass or a lot of heavy music. I was more into funk, reggae, hip-hop, jazz, and traditional ska. But when I was in the mood to hear heavy stuff, I listened to bands like Dillinger, Candiria,

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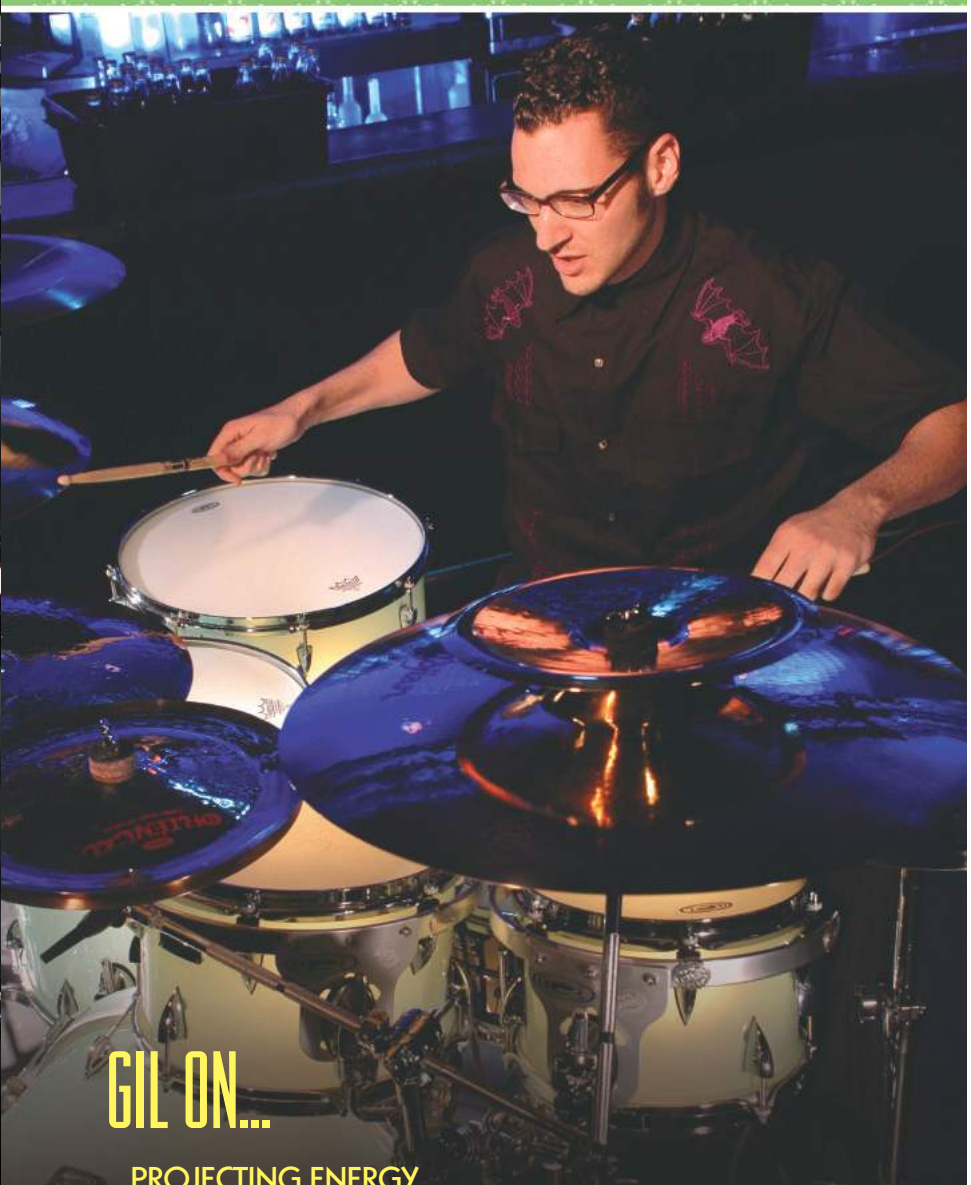
and Meshuggah. Their music was like fusion to me. And I knew that Dillinger had pioneered something. When I heard Calculating Infinity, I thought that was some of the best drumming ever. I still do.

MD: Was it a challenge to learn the older material?

Gil: After figuring out the new stuff for this record, the older songs were pretty easy for me to learn. Certain parts would drive me crazy, but once I cracked the code it was all good.



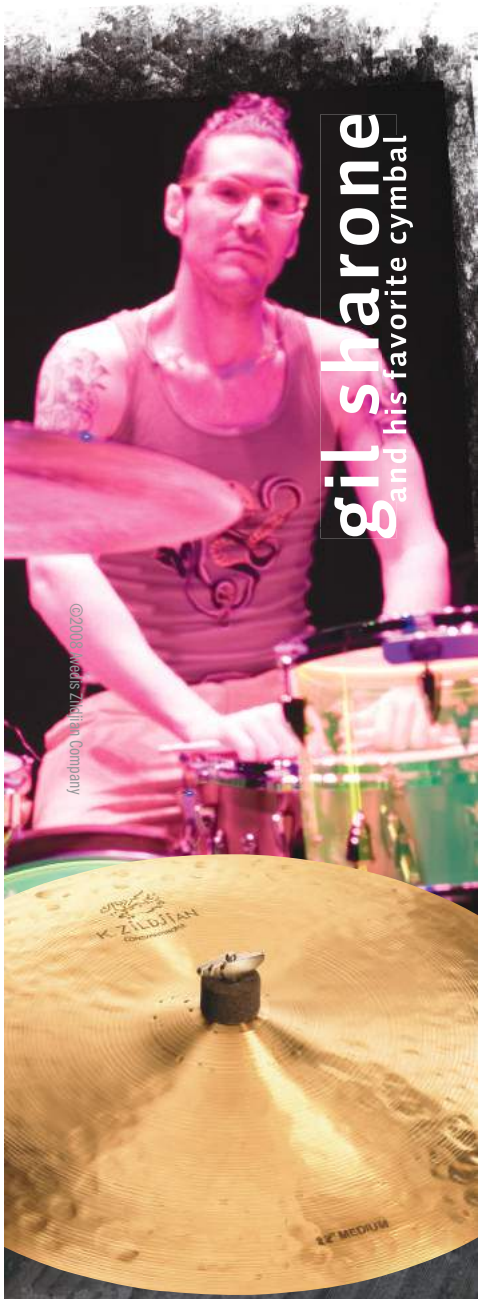
GIL ON...

...PROJECTING ENERGY

"I'm very conscious of what I'm projecting to the audience. In Chinese medicine and martial arts they call the energy inside of you 'chi.' I'm very conscious of projecting that when I play. The way I attack the drums comes from the inside and projects out. Whether I'm slamming or being sensitive, I'm always aware of it. It's a subtle but very powerful way to leave an impression on people."

...CONSTANT GROWTH

"There's no excuse for somebody's playing to plateau. If that happens, then one of two things is going on. Either your technique is so bad that it's not letting you get better, or you're not opening your ears to other kinds of music that'll help give you inspiration. Once you can break those barriers, you should get better every day, even if you don't get to sit down at the drums for twelve hours."



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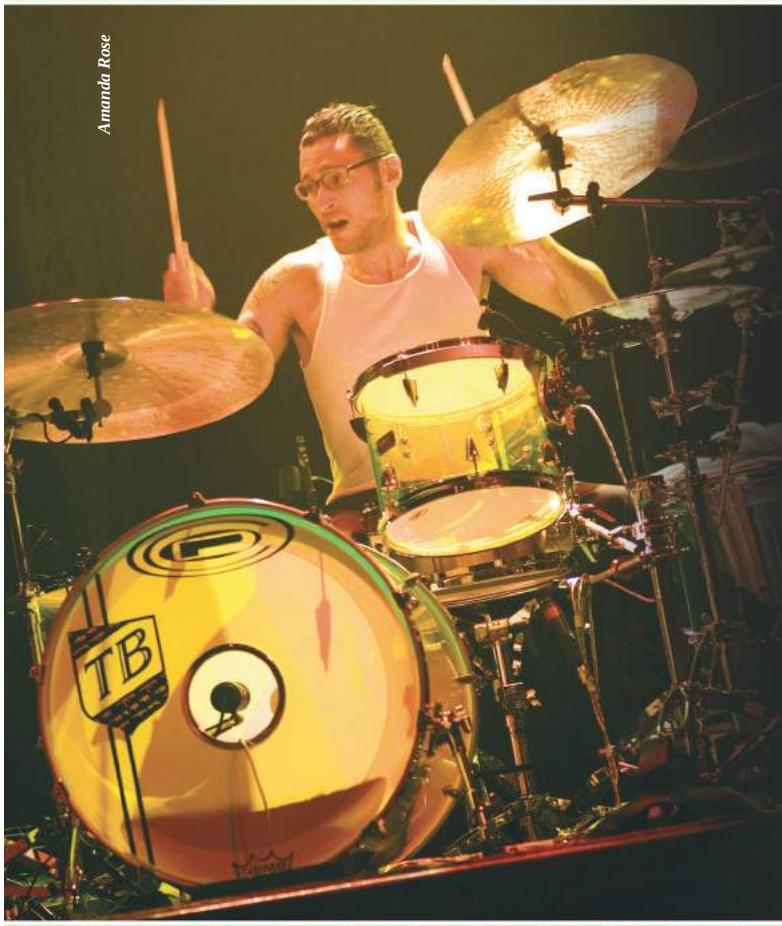
GIL SHARONE

MD: How did you crack the Dillinger code?
Gil: I didn' t sit with just one song at a time. I' d work on small sections of different tracks. So when I started to break them down, I realized things like, " Oh, they like to do that rhythm. And over here they put two 8th notes in the middle to separate it the second time around." Then when I started to sketch things on paper, it made even more sense. I started noticing when rhythmic patterns repeated, which helped me understand their rhythmic vocabulary and arrangement ideas.
MD: Did you find that their material relates to other things you already knew?
Gil: Totally. Some of the more intense rhythmic things that Dillinger plays are like Latin patterns. If you break them down, it' s clave, but with ghost notes, displacements, and other subtleties. The break in " 82588" is like that, and so is the ending to " Baby' s First Coffin" from Miss Machine. If you play the accents in those parts as rimclicks, it sounds like traditional Latin stuff. But to play it fierce and bashing...that' s Dillinger.
MD: You play some more direct Latin-flavored stuff on " Mouth Of Ghosts."
Gil: Yeah. That track came together nicely. It was also really cool to play brushes on the intro.
MD: Was that planned?
Gil: Yeah. We wanted to bring a more smoked-out vibe and let it build up. Ben already had the piano track recorded, so I had to capture that improvised feel of playing with the piano, instead of playing on top of it.

Not a lot of people expected that song from Dillinger. A lot of the band' s fans think that our influences only come from heavy music. But that' s not true. I personally see these songs as funk. When I heard " Party Smasher," I wanted to play it with fierceness and intensity, but with a pocket. That song is funky as hell. And if you slow it down, it' s even funkier. So instead of blazing through it, I practiced it slow. If you can play it slow and make it feel good, you can always speed it up.
MD: " Dead As History" has an electronica vibe. How did that one come together?
Gil: That was another one where I had a lot of input with what I played. When I recorded it, all I heard were the electronics and the click. So I just jammed out, and what I decided to do was used for the arrangement of the song.
MD: Was the double-bass intro to " Nong Eye Gong" your idea?
Gil: Yeah. I heard Chris do a really cool thing for that part, but I didn' t want to copy him. So Liam [Dillinger' s bassist] and I worked out some ideas. The bass is playing a three feel and the guitar is playing a four-16th note thing. So I combined both feels. I' m rolling triplets between the floor tom and kicks, and then I play melodic stuff on top.
MD: " Black Bubblegum" has more of a straightforward rock vibe.
Gil: When I got that song, all it had was a basic groove. Our producer, Steve Evetts, and I came up with cool feels to make it move. In the second verse, I play a tight James Brown-type groove. Then for the bridge, I played a more composed pattern around the toms.
MD: " Milk Lizard" is along the same lines.
Gil: Yeah, but I wanted to make that one feel greasy. I wanted to do big fills inside the verses and make it swing. And I wanted to do some big double bass at the end.
MD: How do you keep that fast double bass ending grooving?
Gil: It' s all about keeping the backbeat in the pocket. And my feet are always dancing on the pedals, so it' s going to naturally come out with that feel. I' m not reinventing the wheel with my double bass playing. I just want to make sure it' s grooving and not stiff. And that' s what matters to the people who have no clue about drum stuff. They just know when they' re hearing something that makes them feel good.
MD: So you' re always trying to find places to throw in little pushes and pulls to keep it grooving.
Gil: Exactly. I' m always looking for spots where I can put in my flavor, my attitude—the swing. Some people have commented after watching some of my YouTube clips that Dillinger got a " reggae drummer" or a " jazz drummer." But I don' t want to be pigeonholed. My goal is always to have crazy chops, have a strong pocket, and be versatile. I want to play whatever style I' m playing like it' s the only style I know. If a Jamaican cat hires me to play a one-drop,


Amanda Rose

SUBBING FOR TRAVIS BARKER

MD: How did you get called for the +44 tour?

Gil: I was called on behalf of Travis by Daniel from OC Drums. I've known Travis for years. Before he was in Blink-182, he was in The Aquabats. I was in a band called Pocket Lent, and we played a lot of shows together on that Orange County scene. Daniel emailed me the night before NAMM asking if I was available for the next month. The next day, he asked if I could fly to Europe to fill in for Travis that afternoon. So I had just enough time to get the album from management, pack a bag, and load the songs into my iPod. I memorized all thirteen songs on the flight to Germany. Then when I got there, I was supposed to watch Travis play a show. But my flight got delayed, so I missed it. I showed up a few hours before he was going to fly back to LA, so I only had a couple of hours with him to talk about the music and the drum parts.

MD: How did you memorize the entire record in such a short time period?

Gil: The music was pretty straightforward, so that helped. But I didn't listen to it like I was doing homework. I just let it sink in. Then I mapped out each arrangement. After a couple listens while looking at my charts, I had the songs memorized.

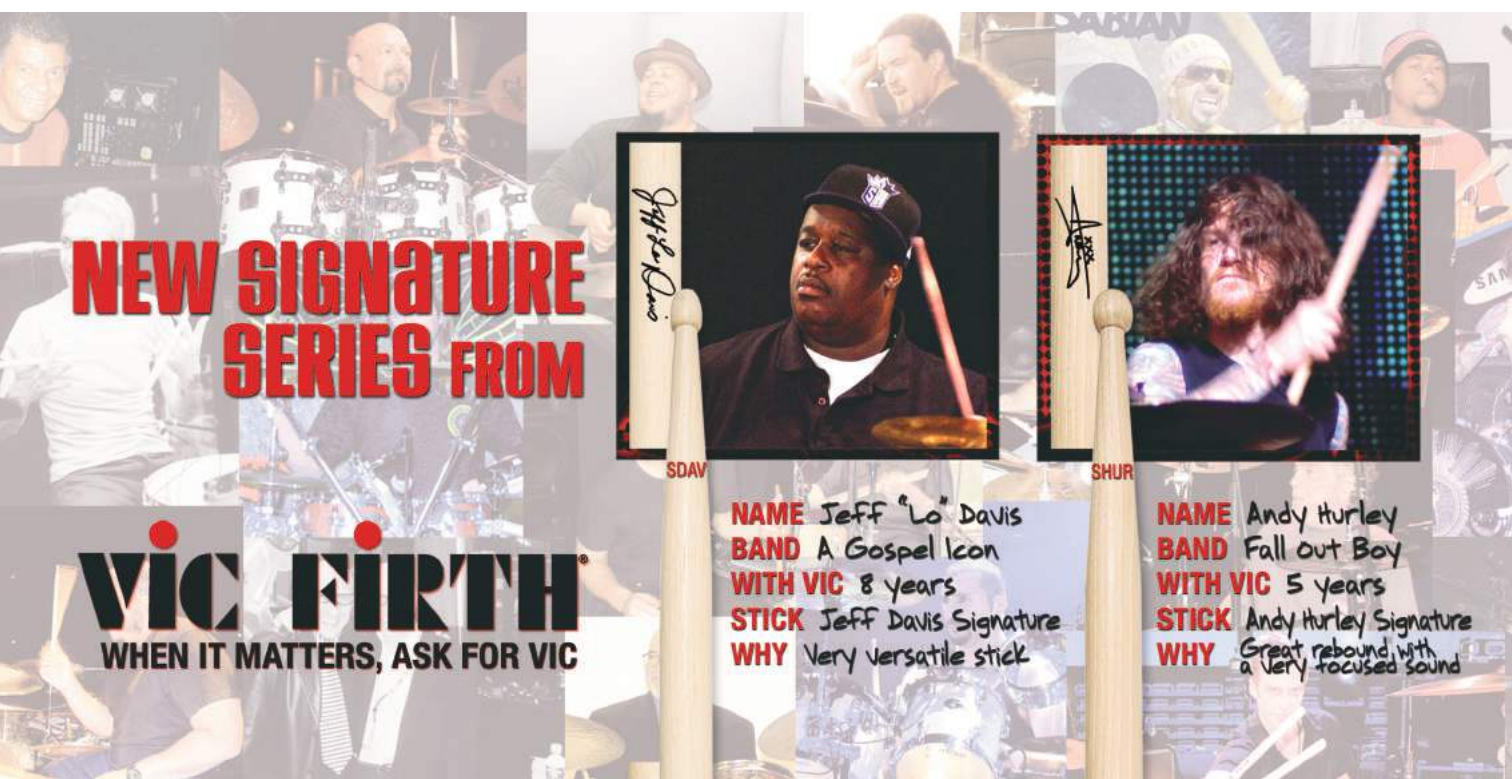
MD: Being so last minute, how'd you stay so relaxed?

Gil: I just stay focused on the job. A lot of guys get caught up in the hype of certain gigs. But I don't think that way. I think like I'm an assassin; I come into situations to kill it. So being focused is crucial. Whatever red-carpet treatment I got...cool. But I'm getting paid to do the job, and I don't stray from that. Even though it was a very high-profile and high-pressure situation, I didn't care. I like being out of my comfort zone to test myself. Those kind of experiences help you grow.

I' m not going to play Dillinger licks for him. I' ve studied the music, so I know the characteristics that need to be there. There are just as many subtleties to how you play the hi-hat, kick, and snare in one-drop as in bebop. The key is to educate yourself on the style. Why does the guy' s snare sound like that? Why do his rolls sound that way? Why does the kick feel that way?

MD: So you' re studying the sound as much as the rhythm.

Gil: The sound, touch, and feel are all the same thing. How you play the drum and the sound that you get out of it affects how it feels.



In The Beginning…

MD: Being self-taught, what was your method for learning? Did you play along to records?

Gil: No. But I would air drum and play along to them on my bed. And all I did during the day at school was think about drums. I' m very visual, so I pictured myself playing. Then Rani, who started bass and guitar at the same time, and I would get home from school and jam until we were told to stop.

MD: What did you and your brother play?

Gil: We' d play whatever was popular at the time. But then a guy hipped us to Fishbone, Primus, and early Chili Peppers. And for a bass player and a drummer, those three bands were our dream. They taught us how to play funky.

MD: So it must have been amazing when you got to play with Fishbone.

Gil: Yeah. That was surreal. All I wanted to do was get the audition and have them hear me play. But when I got there, I wasn' t going to take no for an answer. [laughs]

MD: When did you get hipped to jazz and fusion?

Gil: Within my first year of playing, my buddy Cello gave me Dave Weckl' s record Master Plan, which ended up being a big influence on me. Then Cello sent me the Buddy Rich Memorial Scholarship tapes, which were my biggest teachers back then. That was also around the time another friend turned me on to jazz artists like Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Wayne Shorter.

MD: How did you learn basic technique?

Gil: I met a guy, John Domz, at Guitar Center who showed me how to play a five-stroke roll on the hi-hat within a groove. He later came over to my house and showed me some snare drum basics. Then another guy named George Edwards showed me many of Freddie Gruber' s concepts.

MD: How much were you practicing back then?

Gil: It was non-stop. When I wasn' t playing with Rani, I did a lot of pad work. But I would always practice on the pad as if I was playing on the drumset. It wasn' t like I was dividing my practice into " technique time" and " music time." It was all the same.

Birthing Stolen Babies

MD: How is the music developed in Stolen Babies?

Gil: My brother and our singer, Dominique [Lenore Persi], have a strong vision for what they want this band to be. Their influences aren' t just rock music. They listen to a lot of film scores, twentiety-century classical, cartoon music, and all these contemporary things. So that gets incorporated into our music. Most of the time they want me to hold back and stay out of the way. But I don' t have to worry about that with Dillinger. [laughs]

MD: Your playing with Dillinger and Stolen Babies is very energetic. How do you play so physically without hurting yourself?

Gil: It comes from experience and learning from your mistakes. At a show years ago, I played so hard that my right arm turned to stone. So I vowed to myself that that was never going to happen again.

I learned a couple of things from that experience. One was that it' s very important to develop an understanding of muscle memory. With muscle memory, you can play comfortably within your dynamic range without hurting yourself, regardless of how loud things get on stage. You can develop it by first playing at a comfortable level without earplugs. Then put the earplugs in, but hold on to that dynamic that you were playing before. After a while your body will know

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when you've gone too far. Now I can feel the boundaries of my endurance and stamina. With that discipline, I'm able to play full-out without fatiguing my muscles.

Another huge part of it is breathing. A lot of drummers hold their breath, and you can hear that in their playing. It's impossible to make something feel natural when you're stopping your body from doing the most natural thing that it knows. I've taken this idea to another level through my study of Chi Gong, which incorporates breathing exercises to help the energy flow around your body. When you learn to control and harness your energy, it's a very powerful thing.

MD: So your martial arts training has made a big impact on your drumming.

Gil: Definitely. I've been studying the internal martial art Shing-Yi for eleven years. So I've developed a sync with my training and my playing. There are a lot of parallels between the two: focus, posture, confidence, relaxation, power, dynamics, speed, individuality.... So even when I wasn't drumming a lot, but I was training, all this stuff sprouted out when I got back on my drums.

Hooking Up With Maynard

MD: How did you get involved with Maynard Keenan's Pucifer project?

Gil: A friend who techs for me, Jeremy Burman, brought this guy, Mat, to a Stolen Babies show. Mat techs for Tool and for Nine Inch Nails, and he was producing the Puscifer album with Maynard. He dug the way my brother and I played, so he emailed us saying that he had us in mind for a couple tracks.

MD: What did they need from you?

Gil: Groove. Maynard didn't want things to be busy. And he didn't want things to parallel Tool or A Perfect Circle. So there wasn't a lot of rocking out. It was about supporting the vocals while not letting the groove get stale.

MD: Any advice for someone who wants to get into session work?

Gil: Be prepared to play to a click. And know that the tape doesn't lie. Record yourself at home and listen back. You'll find a lot of flaws, but you'll also find strengths. You also don't want to walk in with an ego or bad attitude. Just show up on time, do what you're hired to do, and keep them calling you back.

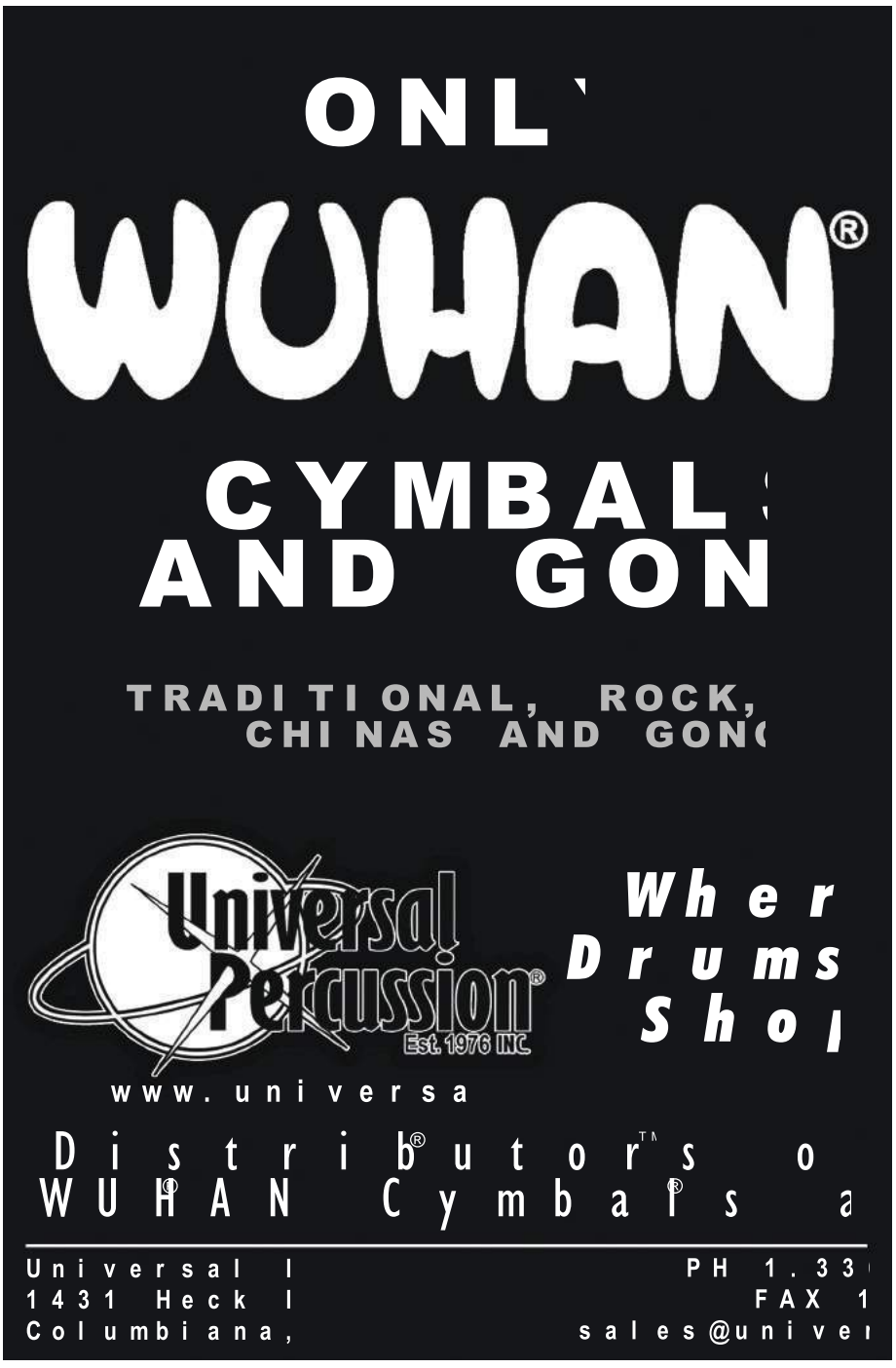
MD: How did you get your internal pulse to a point where you could play comfortably with a click track?

Gil: It developed naturally from playing and listening. If you play to a click long enough, you start to have fun with it instead of getting distracted or scared by it.

There was an experience when I was playing with Dave Wakeling that made me more aware of my time. Our sound guy used to tap in delays for different songs. One night after a show, he told me that I was rushing towards the end. When he told me that, I got insecure. So instead of letting my mind wander as I was playing the song, I was focused inside the music and locked in with the dancing crowd. It's that awareness that's important. If you're not aware, then things will start to happen that you didn't intend.

MD: Any final words of advice?

Gil: It's important to realize that if you want something, you have to work hard and



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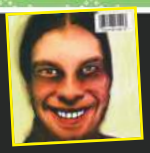
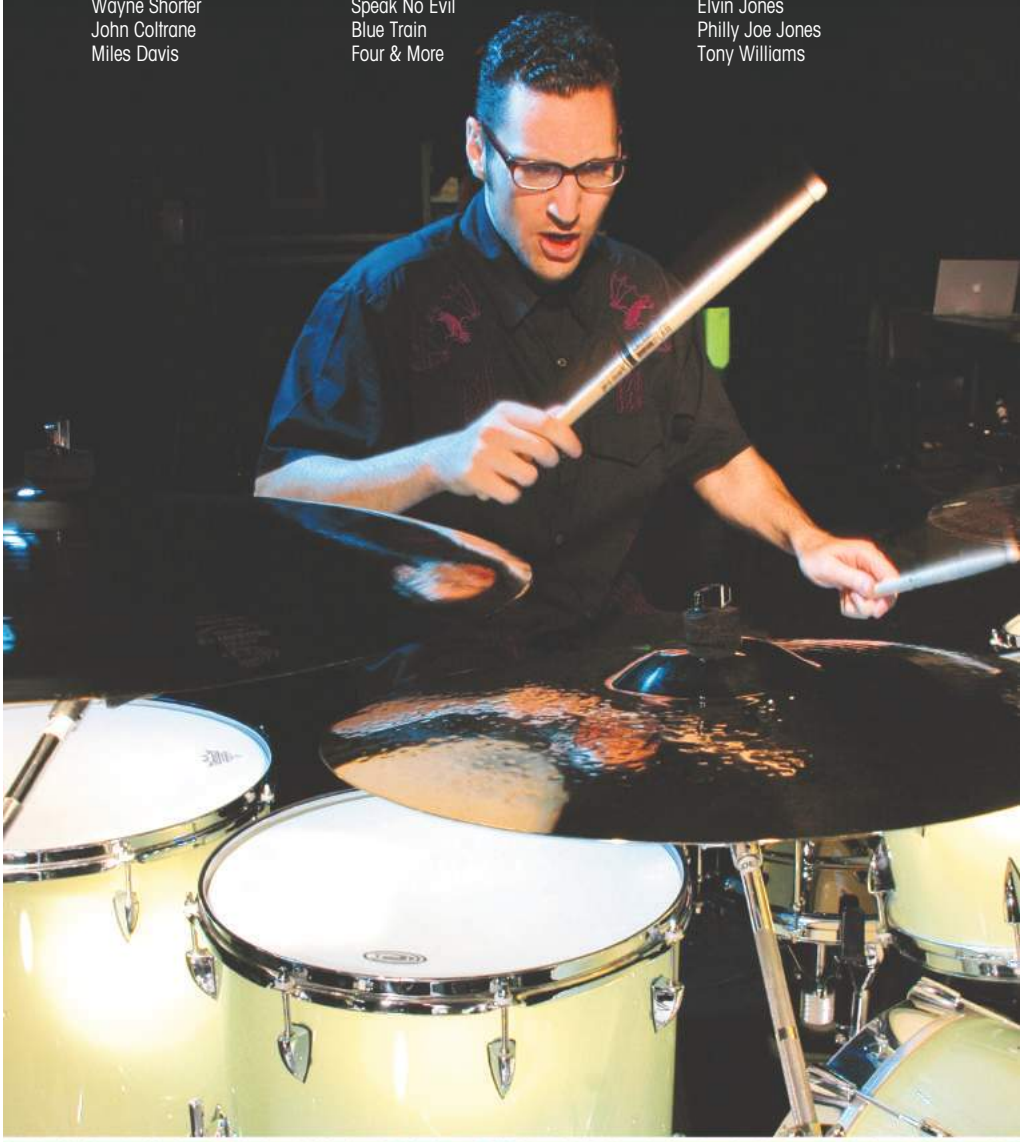
GIL'S FAVES

Here's what Sharone listens to for inspiration.



ARTIST	ALBUM	DRUMMER
Aphex Twin	I Care Because You Do, Richard D. James	programmed
Mobb Deep	The Infamous	programmed
Fishbone	any	Fish Fisher
The Skatalites/Don Drummond	any	Lloyd Knibb
Sizzla	Black Woman & Child	programmed, Sly Dunbar
Gregory Isaacs	Ultimate Collection	Santa Davis, Sly Dunbar, Style Scott
Robert Hurst	Robert Hurst Presents	Jeff "Tain" Watts
Wayne Shorter	Speak No Evil	Elvin Jones
John Coltrane	Blue Train	Philly Joe Jones
Miles Davis	Four & More	Tony Williams



go get it yourself. You can' t expect things to happen and then be bitter when they don' t. You also have to remind yourself of the innocence that you had when you first started drumming. This is such a harsh business that you can easily lose site of why you got into drumming in the first place.

For more on Gil Sharone, log on to www.gilondrums.com.

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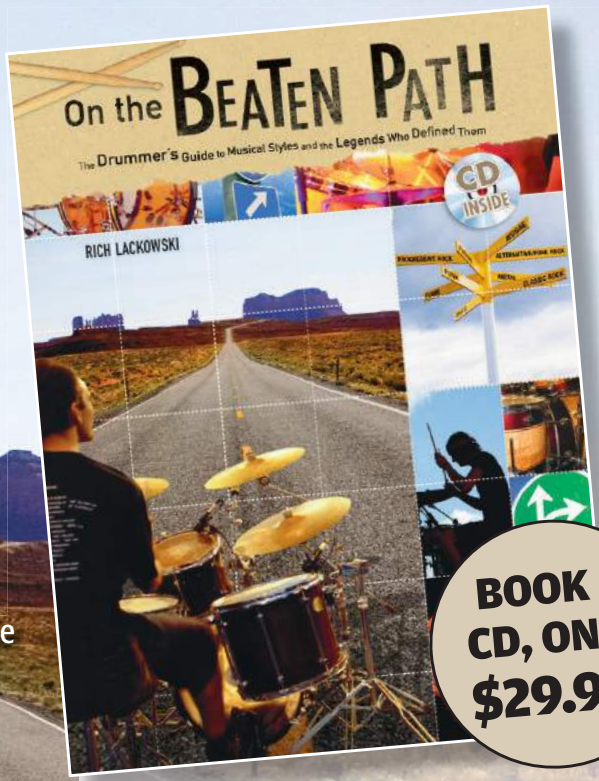

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REMEMBERING THE LATE, GREAT

COZY POWELL

TEN YEARS AFTER, HIS SHADOW LOOMS LARGER

By T. Bruce Wittet

On the tenth anniversary of his death, *Modern Drummer* pays tribute to British icon Cozy Powell, the singularly uncompromising heavy rock drummer. Very few drummers have generated anything faintly resembling Cozy's massive, rumbling presence, nor has anyone propelled a rhythm section with such vibrant personality.

No wonder. Here was a man in absolutely top physical shape, and who took pains to keep it that way, and who insisted on playing not one but two 26" bass drums, three floor toms, and four rack toms, which represented the ultimate in highs to the deepest lows. And his snare drum crack was lethal, the result of drums fitted with "double-die-cast" rims ordinary mortals could barely lift.

If Cozy was emulating falling rocks with Roger Daltrey, it was controlled mayhem with the bass drums. On a slow ballad on Robert Plant's *Pictures At Eleven*, he showed Bonzo's facility at grinding tempos. And always, the crack of his snare was prominent; always his bass drums were deep, ambient, and well-displayed in the mix.

On Rainbow's "Stargazer," drummers still discuss Cozy's eight-bar intro, full of his signature alternating right and left hand with right and left feet, which was cutting-edge at the time. And then there's the way Cozy often made exclamations with hi-hat barks, much in the manner of the New Orleans and Motown drummers he admired.

Cozy was a master of theater. A common device of his was to ignite a massive round of fireworks to climax a drum solo, bass drums rolling hard and fast and cymbals flashing like fireflies on a dark night. (He'd pull that particular trick while playing to orchestra backing tracks with Whitesnake.)

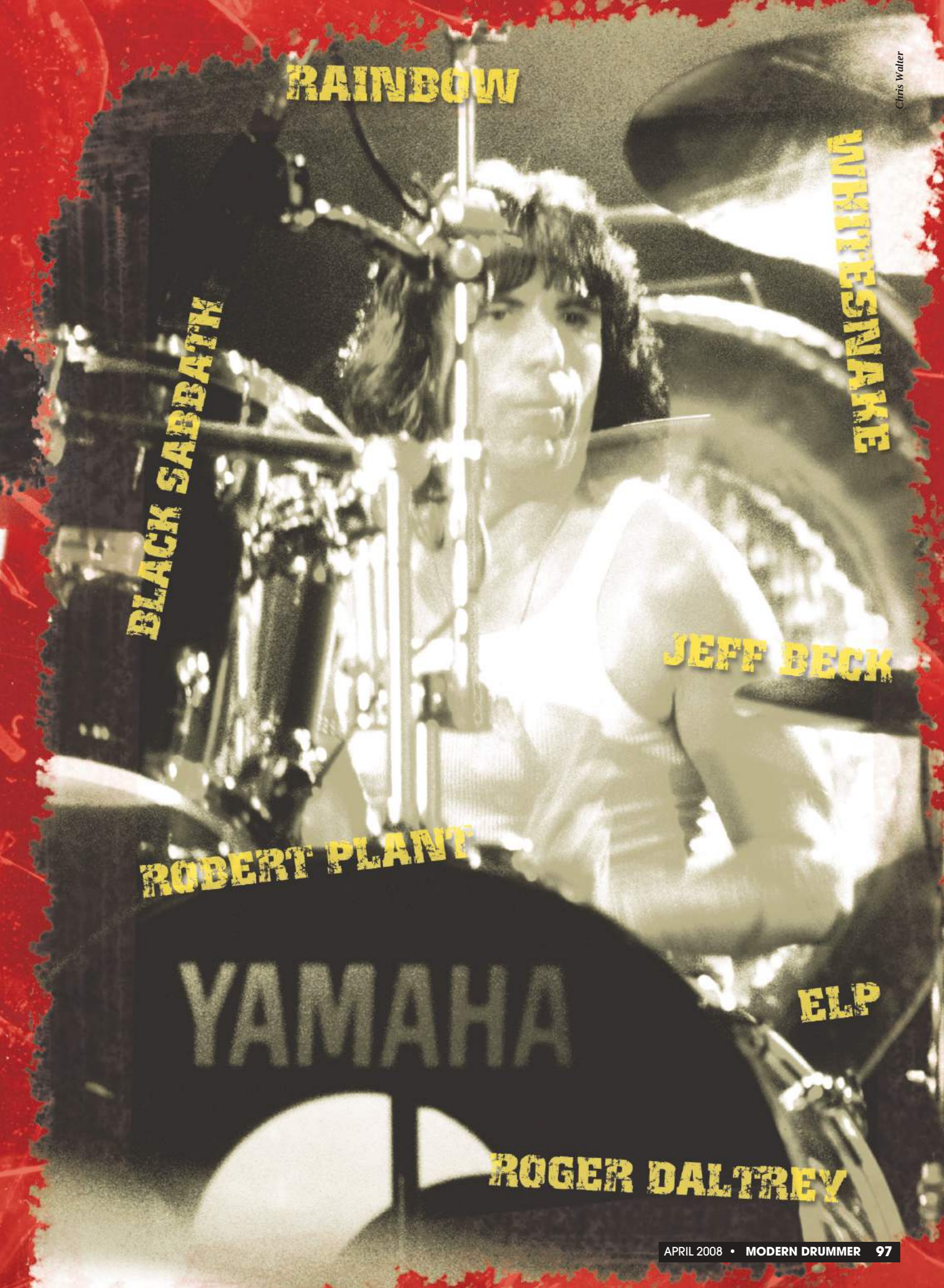
Cozy respected cymbals, and although he seemed to possess elastic arms that could flick distant crashes with frightening accuracy, he did not bash them—a key to his clean sound on tape. Often he'd roll on them with tips, or nudge them, coaxing out the tone in the manner suggested in cymbal company literature.

Drummers from every town in Britain hurried to adopt Cozy's multi-tom/double bass chops. In fact, even in America, odds are that if you ever executed the once fashionable "quads," meaning four-note clusters consisting of alternating R/L hands with R/L feet, you owe Cozy Powell royalties.

Royalty is indeed the operative word. Cozy was perceived to have entered a strata of rock nobility that drew elite musicians and the mightiest bands to seek his services. And he had absolutely no hesitation in parting ways with a million-selling act. When Cozy got home, he knew the phone would ring—and it would be a Roger Daltrey or a Brian May.

Arguably only one drummer in Cozy's era stands as proud under historical scrutiny, and that drummer commanded Cozy's lifelong respect: John Bonham. Cozy openly admitted his debt to Bonzo and adopted his plundering attack, implicit in Bonham's war cry: cannons!

Of course, Cozy was a little more level-headed than Bonzo. To be sure, he courted dangerous women and even more dangerous Formula automobiles. But he kept a closer tab on excesses. One night in April, 1998, however, while talking to his girlfriend on the car phone, he finally lost control. Cozy was driving a tweaked-up Saab that bolted off the M series freeway near Bristol, England, ending his illustrious career—and life—much too soon.



Chris Walter

When MD began preparing a tribute to Cozy for this sad anniversary, the tragedy of the drummer's passing was lightened by a pleasant discovery. I had approached Cozy in late 1997 to research an article on playing loud. With MD quotes done, we began a long chat about Cozy's views on drums, cymbals, his past, and the music business. All the while, the tape kept running. I archived the tapes, but somehow they lodged themselves in the folds of a cardboard storage container. Luckily, they emerged during a shop cleaning several months ago. The "Lost Cozy Powell Tapes" reveal the drummer's candid, sometimes intimate reflections in rare depth. We'd like to share those tapes with you. But first a little background.

Born in Cirencester, England in 1947, baptized as Colin, young Powell borrowed "Cozy" from Cozy Cole, the famous jazz drummer whose gigs included the popular Louis Armstrong. Ironically, Cozy Powell and Cozy Cole both released successful solo "drum singles."

Chris Walter

Cozy Powell's discography reads like a heavy metal who's who and includes dirge masters Black Sabbath, heavy blues-rockers Whitesnake, and the bombastic but inventive Rainbow. In fact, Cozy became a sort of jobbing drummer for the stadium set. His short tenures with groups are explained by his habit of suggesting that his employer "sod off" (or worse). If Cozy felt aggrieved by his employer, he'd grab his lunch pail and walk.

Often, fate dictated that Bobby Rondinelli would replace Cozy. In fact, Bobby replaced him on so many gigs that Cozy affectionately termed the American a "grave robber," even offering Bobby the keys to his girlfriend's flat. ("You've done everything else I've done!") Bobby confirms that Cozy took heat from nobody, no matter how high and mighty they were.

Cozy's first band was The Sorcerers, a mid-'60s unit he met in Germany. German nightclubs demanded seven or more sets a night, a harsh reality that whipped Cozy's stamina and chops into shape.

Returning to England, The Sorcerers changed names and personnel. Cozy resurfaced in various configurations with Dave and Denny Ball. At one point, Cozy attempted a power trio with bassist Dave Pegg (Fairport Convention) and Clem Clempson (Colosseum). Certain lineups, such as The Ace Kefford Band, made it past the demo stage and garnered modest success.

During the early '70s, Cozy began a studio relationship with Mickie Most, the famed British producer known for The Animals' "House Of The Rising Sun." Most headed an assembly-line production house and hired top musicians such as Jimmy Page and John Paul Jones. Sometimes Cozy's tracks appeared on albums; other times they were replaced, as Cozy intimates to us in our exclusive interview. At any rate, he recorded hundreds of titles for unknowns and well-knowns including Suzi Quatro, Hot Chocolate, and Donovan. Then Jeff Beck came calling.

Cozy had an on-again, off-again relationship with Beck, finally agreeing on a lineup that included the great Max Middleton on keyboards and Bobby Tench on vocals. Among the

hit albums this group recorded were The Jeff Beck Group and Rough And Ready. Clips from that band are circulating on YouTube and show the essential Cozy Powell at work, full of dramatic moves, including commanding bass drum punctuated by those far-reaching cymbal crashes. The clips also demonstrate that Cozy was not simply a rough and ready rocker but a refined drummer comfortable in many styles. Bobby Rondinelli observes, " Cozy had a funky side, which I liked, and which you can hear in songs like ' Ice Cream Cakes' and ' Goin' Down' ."

Unfortunately Jeff Beck was restless and left the band for a " supergroup" (a popular marketing ploy in the early ' 70s) that included Tim Bogert and Carmine Appice. So Cozy took a real left turn, teaming up with the California jazz-rock group Spirit, an unlikely partnership that didn' t last long.

The first band featuring Cozy' s name was Cozy Powell' s Hammer, a short-lived but effective team, which the drummer disbanded in favor of another group featuring Clem Clempson, Strange Brew.

In 1973, Cozy got considerable radio play with a drum solo tune, " Dance With The Devil." Released just before Christmas that year, it found its way under many trees, was featured on Britain' s most popular TV music show, Top Of The Pops, and provided the opportunity for him to record two additional drum singles.

Around this time Cozy took a break from music to pursue his passion for fast cars, competing in Formula Three racing and being sponsored by Hitachi. He did well and continued with it—until he got restless. Then in 1975, Cozy was invited to join Rainbow, the band created by guitarist Ritchie Blackmore after he departed Deep Purple. The drummer lasted about five years, recorded a handful of records, and enjoyed the heavy metal attitude that prevailed, only departing when the repertoire became excessively commercial.

Accordingly, Cozy began a tenure with The Michael Schenker Group, a more appropriate forum for his mature heavy rock style. It was an association that, perhaps, prevented him from taking up with the members of Led Zeppelin after John Bonham' s death. Cozy' s name had come up as a possible replacement.

Cozy did join Zeppelin singer Robert Plant for the recording of his excellent Pictures At Eleven album. Unfortunately, Cozy' s commitments to Michael Schenker took him out on the road, and Phil Collins finished the album. His sound on Plant' s album reveals the trademark high-pitched snare, which contrasted with the huge bass drums. " By that time," remarks Bobby Rondinelli, " he had the kind of clout that could pressure them to put the drums up in the mix. Cozy always had a great bass drum and snare sound."

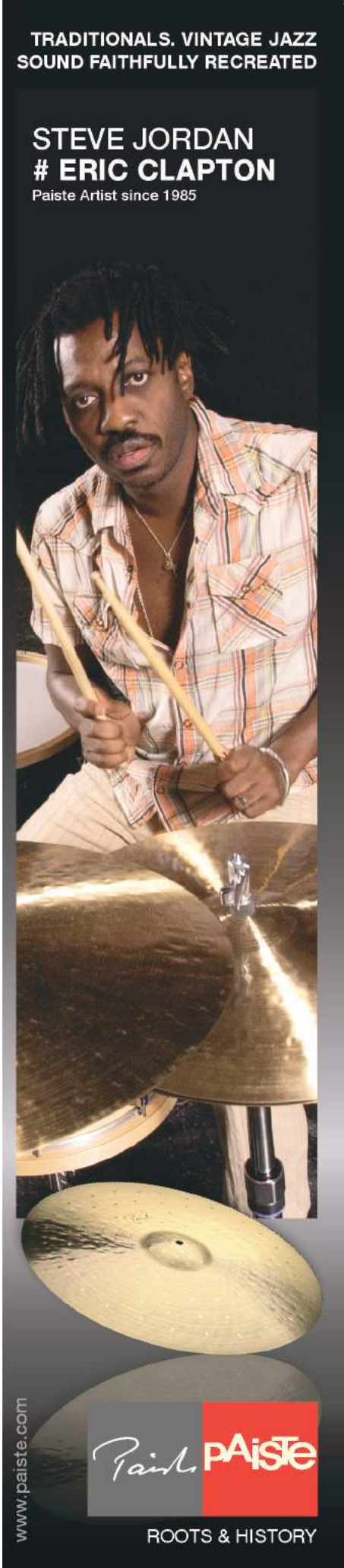
A two-year stint with Whitesnake ended in 1985 when Cozy became the new " P" in ELP, replacing Carl Palmer in the legendary group. With Emerson, Lake & Powell, Cozy was faced with complex arrangements. " I had to write down all these crazy parts on reams of paper," he remarked. " It' s a good thing that it took the band a while to get going, because it took me time to get the music down."

With ELP, Cozy' s kit was a combination of Simmons electronics and Yamaha acoustic drums, and his theatrical requirements were fulfilled with a full sound and light show. Unfortunately, personality issues shut down the band.

Cozy then signed up with Black Sabbath and went into rehearsals. Unfortunately he was injured while horseback riding. Sabbath turfed him in favor of Vinnie Appice, and then, of course, Bobby Rondinelli. Months later, Cozy recovered and joined Brian May on the Guitar Legends tour. May was an early Cozy fan and favored the drummer for many recording projects.

As fate would have it, Black Sabbath reared its cloaked head again and urged Cozy to re-enter the fold. Accordingly, Cozy recorded The Headless Cross in 1989 and TYR the following year. In his down time, Cozy tracked with various artists, including The Who' s John Entwistle and eccentric Fleetwood Mac guitarist Peter Green. Indeed, by the mid-' 90s, Cozy was working constantly. Unfortunately, his fateful car crash put an abrupt end to his agenda.

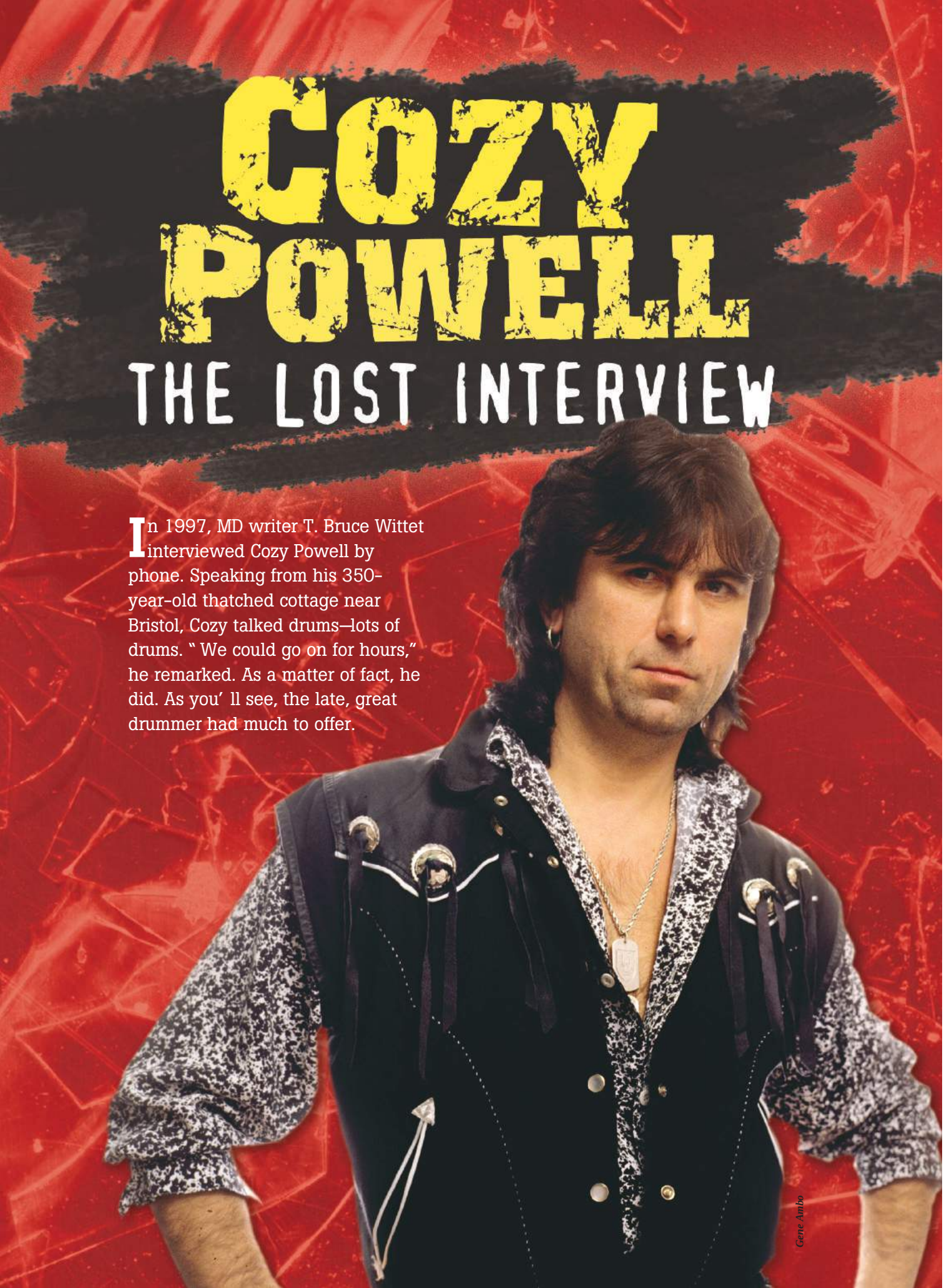
Adds Bobby Rondinelli: " One of the coolest things you can say about any drummer is that you can tell who it is just by listening. That' s the way Cozy was for me. He had a definite style, and he put his thumbprint on everything he did."



COZY POWELL

THE LOST INTERVIEW

In 1997, MD writer T. Bruce Wittet interviewed Cozy Powell by phone. Speaking from his 350-year-old thatched cottage near Bristol, Cozy talked drums—lots of drums. " We could go on for hours," he remarked. As a matter of fact, he did. As you' ll see, the late, great drummer had much to offer.



Gene Ambo

MD: You must have a lot of experiences, some printable, arising from your early days playing in German clubs.

Cozy: You' d have to have a couple of days, mate, and your phone bill would be very steep! In those days there were no mics; everything was played acoustically. I started off with The Sorcerers, a band I met in Germany in 1966, which played pop hits. Everybody did that over there.

The first time I came across anybody who played with any real volume was when I saw John Bonham. The kit was kind of thrown on the stage, but he played and there was this power. When I saw him play, I thought to myself, This is where it' s going, this is what drumming is all about.

I' d been playing already for ten years at the time and thought I knew it all, but when I saw John my jaw dropped to the floor. I couldn' t believe what I was hearing. It was the single most important statement made to me about drumming. When I saw John Bonham, I decided to change my style of drumming. This guy had such natural ability and aggression that I just had to emulate it. I can' t say that I' d ever be as good as him...but at least I could try to be like him.

MD: Do you remember what changes you went through?

Cozy: I can. In those days, drummers were desperate to be noticed. They' d sit very high. Well, that' s the first thing you change. The only way to get any power is to sit low. I studied the way John sat and, if you notice, he sat low and " into" the kit. People like Carl Palmer—and I' m not trying to slag him off here—but they sit very high so they can be noticed when they take their shirt off, whereas Bonzo sat low.

Literally overnight I changed my drumming style. You have choices, and I took the choice of being a more solid rock drummer. The kind of impression Bonham had made on me, I wanted to make on young kids

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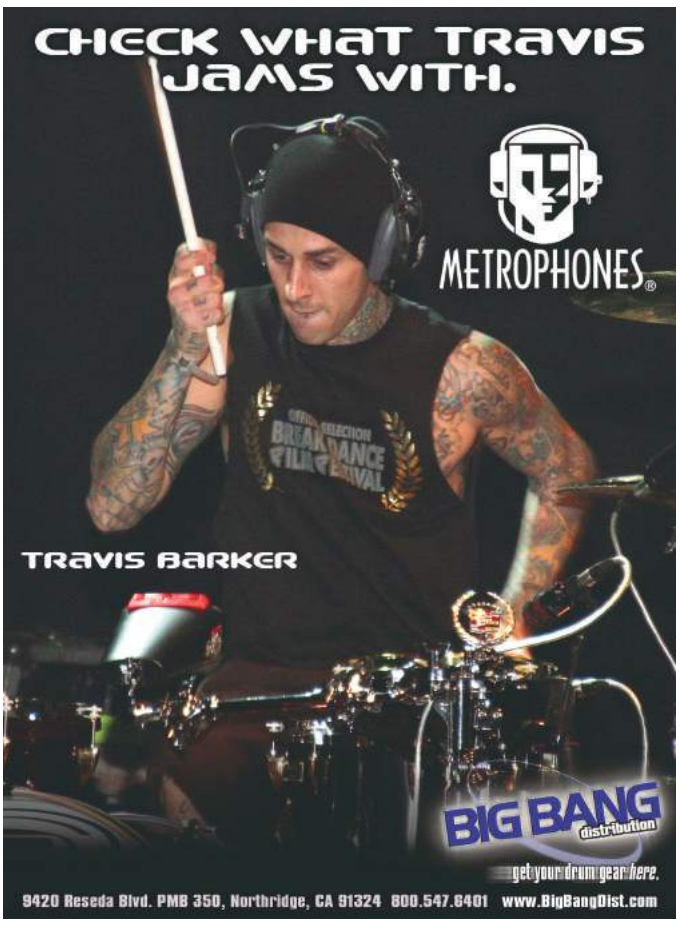
coming up. John tuned his drums open. They' d ring a little bit and have this " snap" when he hit them hard. He hit the drums mercillessly hard. He really could demolish a drumkit, no trouble. I don' t think kids will ever know what that sort of physical power is like unless they' ve ever witnessed it.

MD: You' ve always had a much larger setup than Bonham. How do you ensure that you get a distinct sound from each of those drums?

Cozy: The first thing, when you go into the studio, is that the engineer says, " I hear all this ringing," and I say, " That' s the sound of the drumkit, you prick! That' s the way it' s supposed to sound. What you' re supposed to do is get that sound down on tape." I' ve had so many rows with engineers and producers over the years it' s unbelievable. But if you don' t have overtones, the kit' s going to sound dead.

MD: Do you adhere to the Bonham thing, tuning your heads higher?

Cozy: Yes. I tune the top head tighter than the bottom head, and I try and get a balance between the crack of the drum itself and the tonal quality. At the moment, I' m playing Yamaha maple drums and they' re



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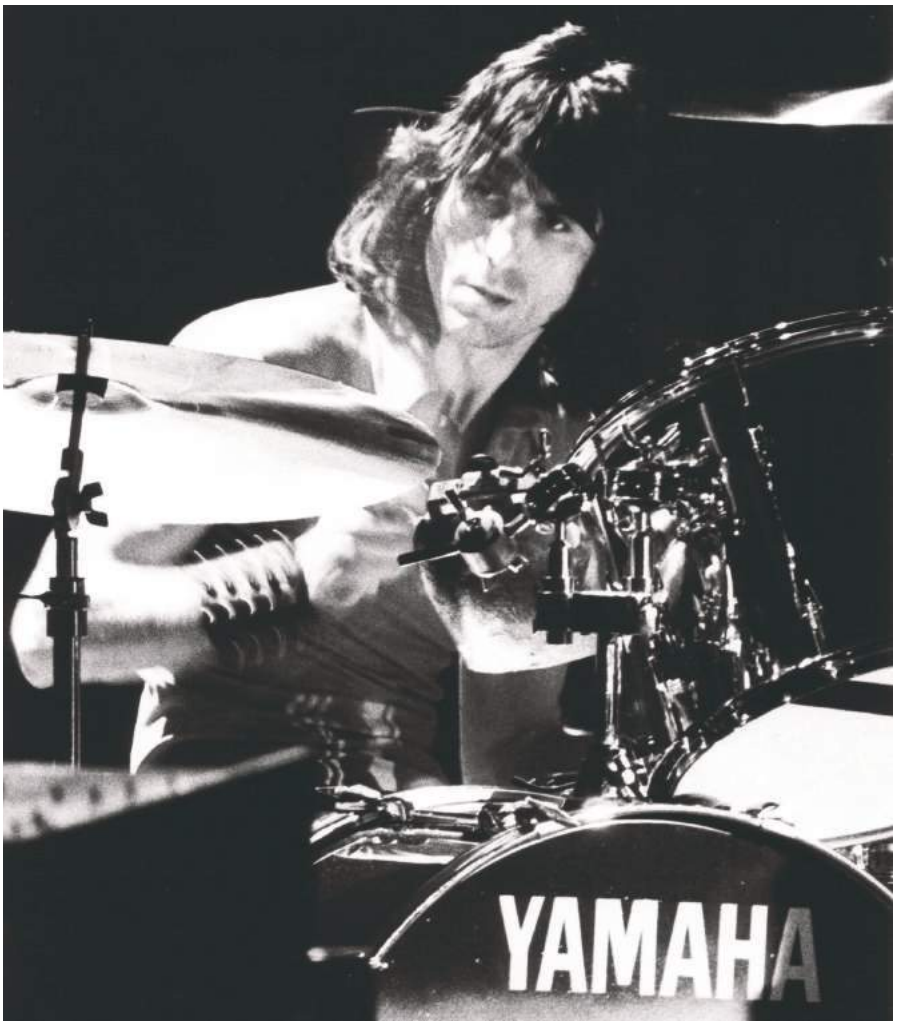


COZY POWELL

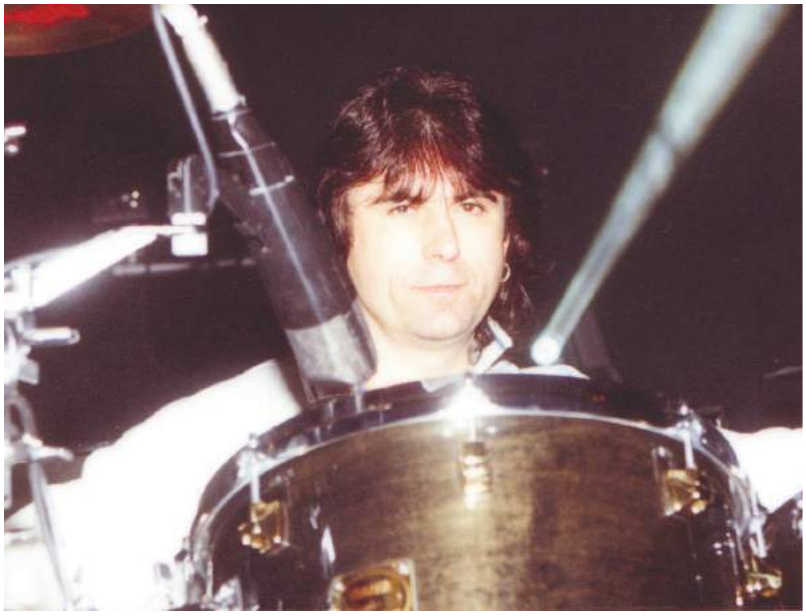
great; they' re as good as the maple drums Ludwig made in the ' 70s. You take the Yamaha drums out of the box, set them up in the studio, and they sound great. The first time I heard John Bonham play the maple kit Ludwig made for him, they sounded awesome. But things have moved on a lot since then.

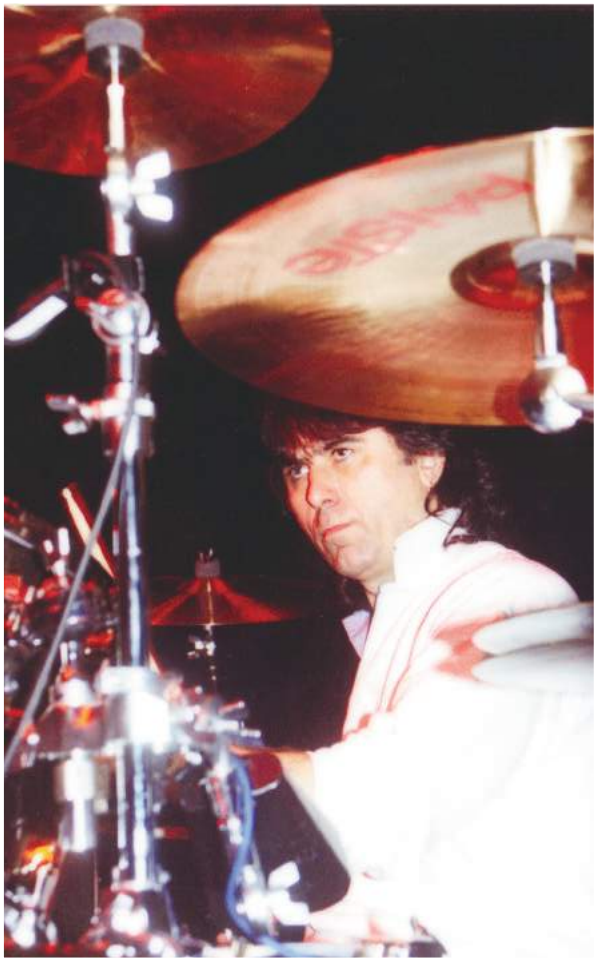
I' ve always used metal snare drums. Yamaha made me some custom metal shells with very heavy-duty steel rims. They' re so heavy you can hardly lift them up! I told them I needed them for projection and they looked at me as if I was talking nonsense.

MD: Talking about heavy rims, I remember Carmine Appice saying that in the old days, everybody would play rimshots even on the toms. Did you do that?

Cozy: I did. Rimshots are very important to my style of playing, even on the toms when needed. It' s funny: When Bonham came back from the first tour of the States, he told me, " This guy I' ve just seen, Carmine Appice, is amazing, but I' ll tell you something: I can still play louder than him!"

One thing I did to achieve volume is change from matched to traditional grip in my left hand. You can' t get the power unless you play the orthodox style. And I changed the angle of my snare drum so it angled down





towards me more so I could hit it harder and get the rimshot sound. I angled the toms in the same way so I could hit them in the center or with a rimshot. Since I' ve always played two bass drums, I lowered the stool so that my legs were level with the floor for maximum power. I built the rest of the kit around that. Everything went down in height. The cymbals would be positioned so that when I hit them it would be halfway through, as if you were chopping a piece of wood and the impact would be halfway down the arc. You' ve got the most power at that certain point halfway down.

Then I went into the gym and did a lot of work. I studied boxing, which I figured was the best thing for drummers. I got speed on the bag, and I

worked out on weights, sitting on a chair moving backwards and forwards. I wanted to improve my muscles in relation to what I wanted to do as a professional drummer.

MD: At extreme volumes you don't simplify your fills like some guys.

Cozy: That's down to sheer perseverance. With Jeff Beck, which was my first big gig, I wanted to show people I could play hard but have chops as well. I'd practice a four-stroke ruff and go from the floor tom to the top toms and work out this kind of rolling thing. If you listen to "Stargazer," from the Rainbow album, there's that sort of "roll" thing. I could do that, on any combination of drums, at the same pace, for quite a long time. It's a statement; you have to play as if you mean it. And that's how I've always approached drumming—playing as if it's my last show ever.

I taught myself how to drum and took it upon myself to learn how to project in stadiums. I'd work out a way to hit a drum hard, but not so hard that it would choke. It's the same with a cymbal; you've got to find a balance. If you can hear it in your head and know what you're looking for, then you can build your body up to do what you're hearing.

Another thing is that a normal stick, on a rimshot level, was not good enough. I asked Yamaha to make a similar stick as a 3A or 5A but half again as heavy to withstand rimshots. After a while, I got used to playing with this weight, and the power I get is incredible. You see, with 5As, I would have to turn them around and play with the butt end, which wouldn't be satisfactory because then I wouldn't get the same feel out of the cymbals. I show these sticks to some drummers and they look at me as if I'm bonkers! You play a 24" ride with a jazz stick and it'll sound like crap, in my opinion.

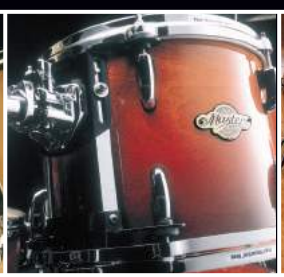
MD: You are a fan of Paiste Giant Beat cymbals [discontinued at the time of this interview]. They were touted as a cymbal for heavy rock, although by today's standards they're quite mellow.

Cozy: I remember that they had a kind of "medium brilliance." They didn't sound like a Zildjian, in the sense of a hard, jazzy tone. They were softer in some respects. When you hit them hard, though, they projected more. It's the frequencies in the mids to upper-mids that project, and that was their secret. It's a softer cymbal than a Zildjian, if that makes sense, but if you hit it hard, it had a similar resonance to the 3000 series. When Paiste

Barry Kerch of Shinedown

Photo by Neil Zlozower

The Name is Legendary.



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went back to 2002s, I made my feelings clear at the factory because I think that 3000s had a similar feeling to the Giant Beats.

MD: You' ve always played a 15" 602 hi-hat—also a line long gone.

Cozy: That' s a fabulous cymbal. I managed to get six or seven pairs and horde them because there' s nothing equaling that sound, nothing to equal that crispness. It sounds a little silly—I mean, we' re talking as connoisseurs—but it' s an excellent, heavy, clean cymbal. Nothing today has that " edge." As professionals we all try so many cymbals, but the Formula 602 was special.

It' s like Ferrari motorcars. They bring out something special—select, classy models—and they move on, thinking they' ll improve it. They don' t, of course!

MD: You' re a man dear to me because you prefer 20" crash cymbals. That' s a great sound.

Cozy: Right. In my opinion, 16" and 18" crashes have got a nice sound and high-end quality, but the 20" heavy crashes..when you hit one of those, you feel it three blocks away. It' s a serious statement, as opposed to an after-effect.

Because of the way I' ve played over the years, people think I' m some heavy drummer who' s not concerned with cymbal sounds. But there' s so much subtlety in cymbals. A lot of kids today just hit them hard as if they' re separate objects, but they have to complement the drumset.

MD: Let' s say things didn' t work out and you' re now working at a drum shop. A kid comes in and says, " Mr. Powell, I' m playing a metal gig. Could you advise me as to a good cymbal setup?"

Cozy: It' s very difficult because it' s a personal thing. I use thirteen or fourteen cymbals, always the same ones, including a 24" ride that' s made specially for me. It' s so seriously on the money that when I use it on sessions—I used it with Brian May on the Pinocchio film—it cuts through unbelievably. We cut tracks with The Seattle Symphony Orchestra and it cut through the timpani, percussion, brass, and strings.

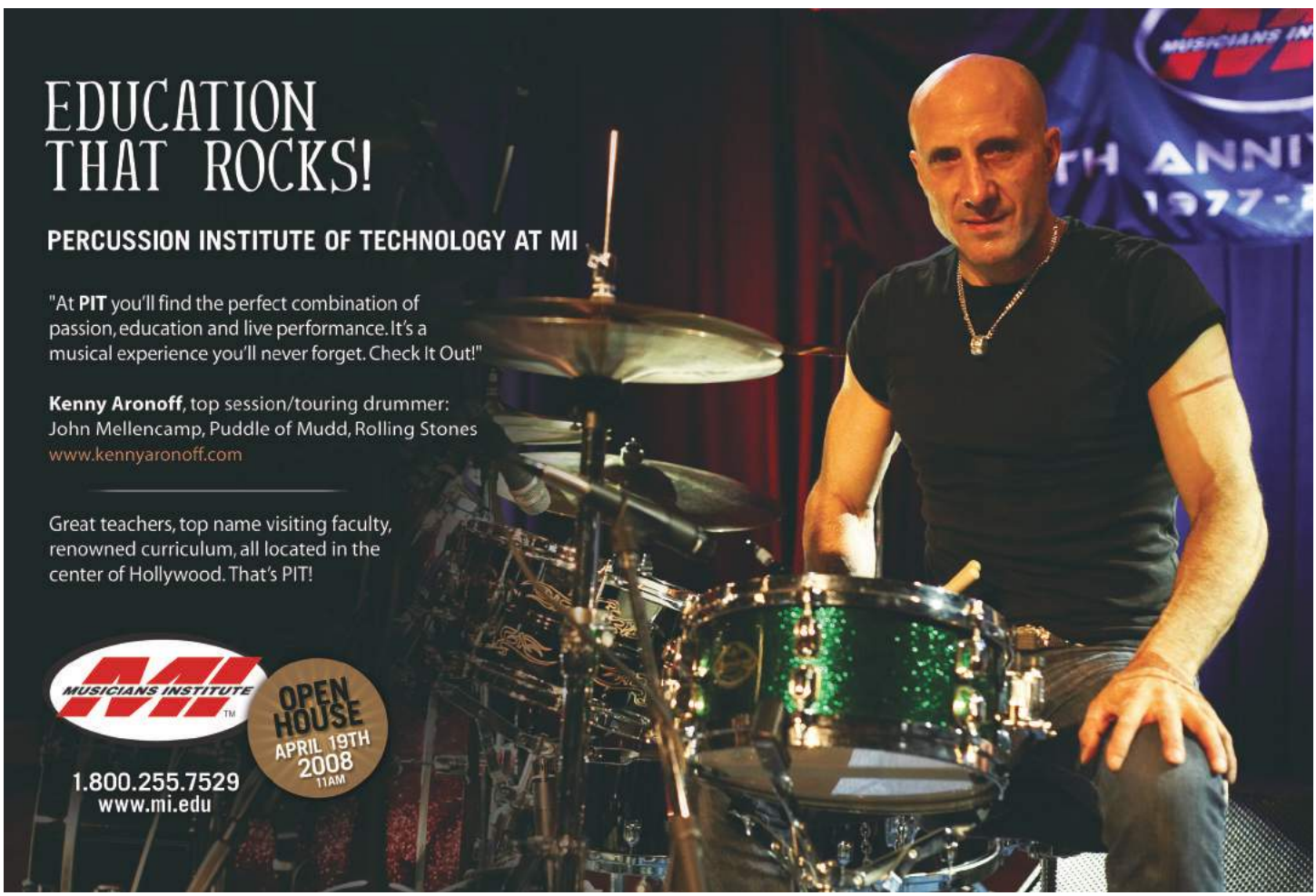
MD: Speaking of studio, you worked for producer Mickie Most. You played with many artists, including Donovan. Did you play on, say, " Sunshine Superman" ?

Cozy: No, but I did do lots of album stuff. In those days I played all the demo tracks, up to when they recorded the top-line track. I did all the groundwork for a lot of the hits that came out in the ' 70s. Some of the time, they would keep the drums. Depending whether I was available for the final tracks, they would use me or somebody else. In those days it was a cutthroat business and you got used to doing pre-production. Sometimes it seems that my whole career has been spent doing pre-production.

Do you remember that big Whitesnake album in 1987 that sold fifteen million? Well, I did the whole album. God bless him, Aynsley [Dunbar] came in and redid it all. I did a number of albums for other groups, where I did all the groundwork. It' s one of those political things, part of the business, and I really shouldn' t complain because I' ve been on a lot of records that have been hits.

MD: Such as Robert Plant' s Pictures At Eleven.

Cozy: Well, that' s another example. I did the whole album and Phil [Collins] came in and finished it. It' s not a bad thing to have Phil Collins as a " deputy." I had to go on tour with the Michael Schenker Group and couldn' t complete the album. Robert told me that Phil Collins came in, heard my tracks, and said, " There' s nothing wrong with these. I couldn' t do any better." That' s a real compliment.



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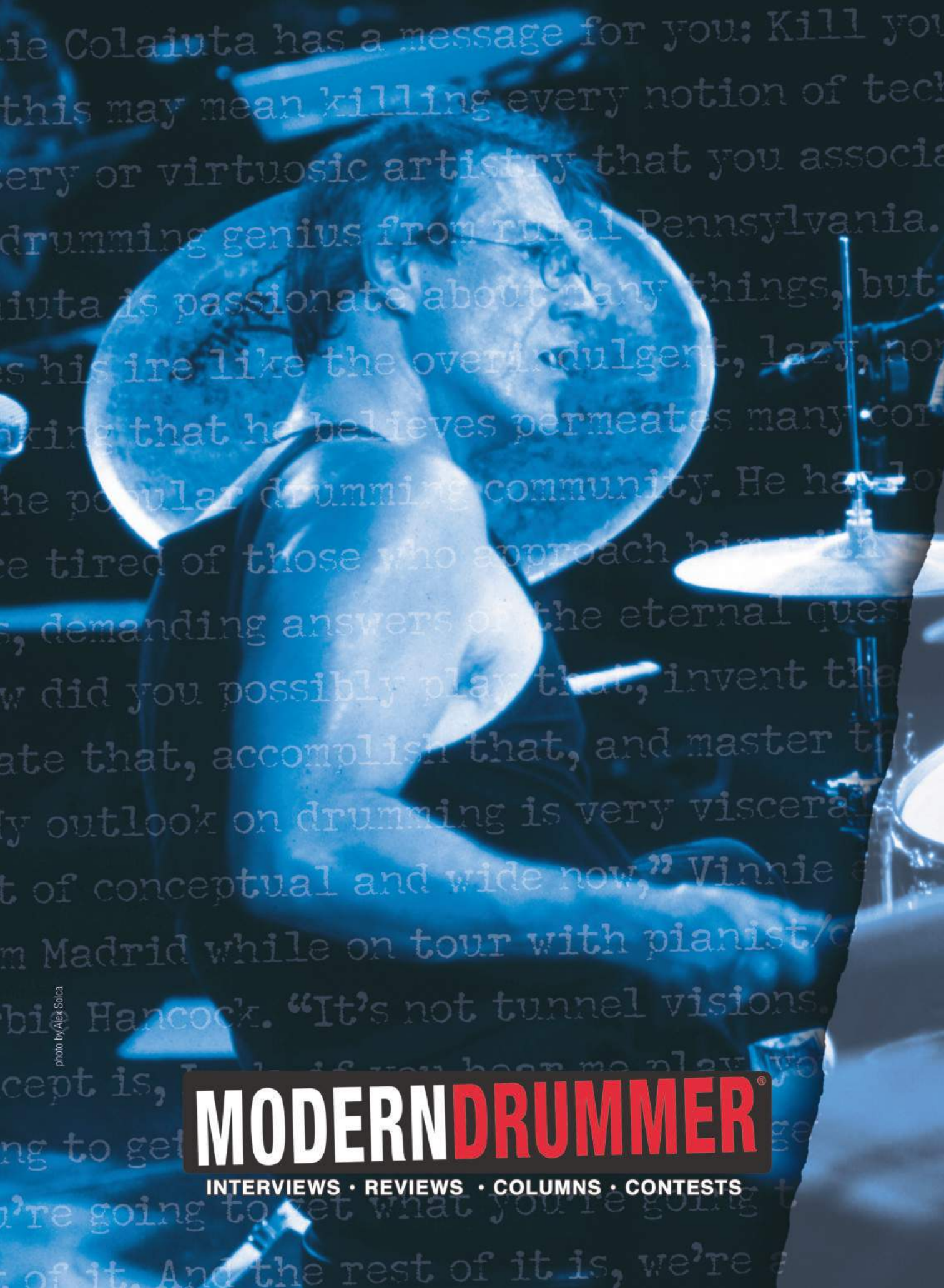
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DON'T MISS A WORD. DON'T MISS A BEAT.

"I don't feel driven to work on difficult stuff so that people can say, 'Oh, he's got that down, too.' I develop something because I love it."

— Vinnie Colaiuta (March 2007)

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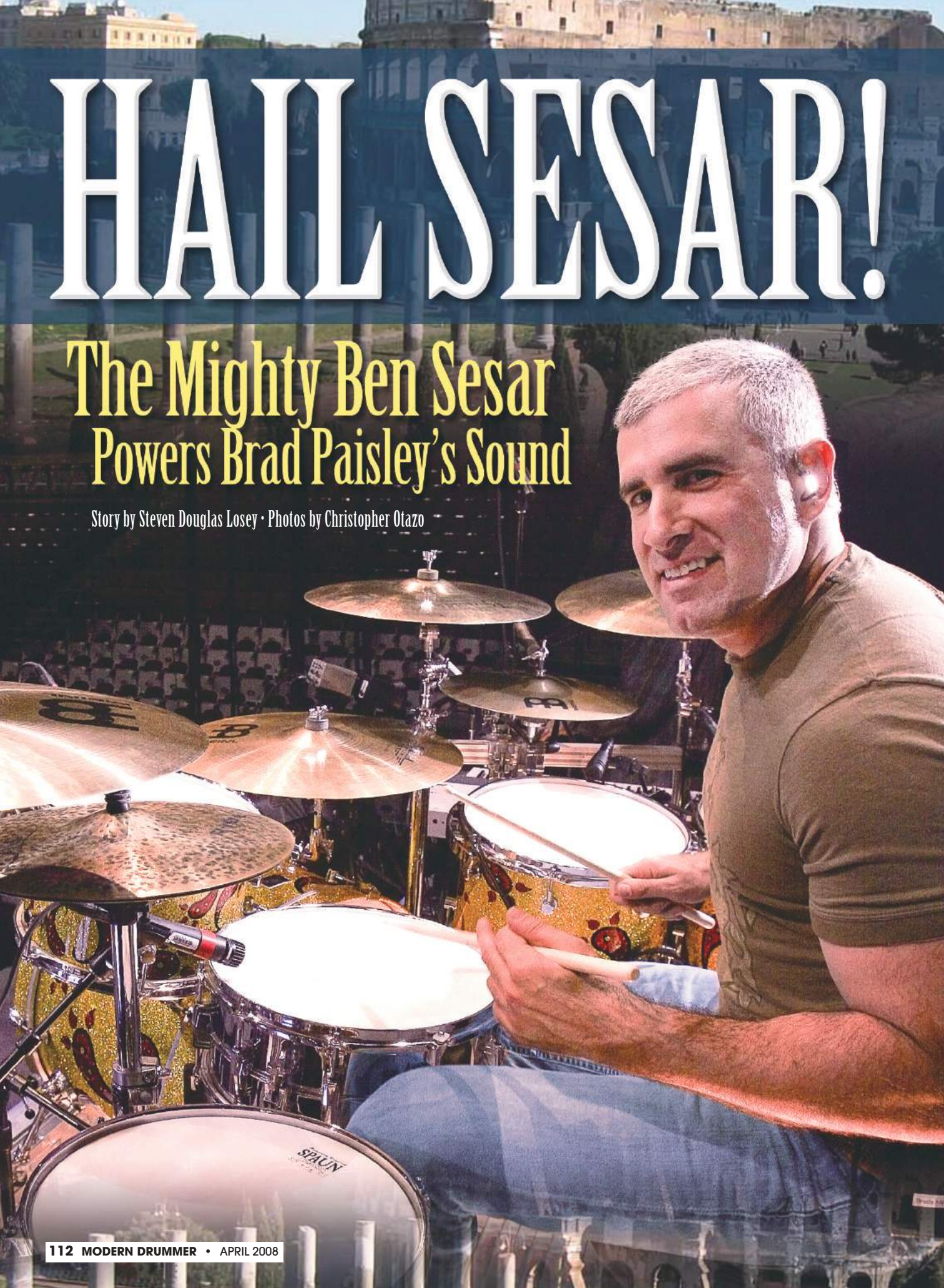
HAIL SESAR!

The Mighty Ben Sesar Powers Brad Paisley's Sound

Story by Steven Douglas Losey • Photos by Christopher Otazo



In the early days, Ben Sesar never set up his kit in the corner of a honky-tonk. He never played behind chicken wire or covered "Boot Scootin' Boogie." He *was* playing in bands, though, riffing Bonham and Van Halen—and waiting to be a rock star.

While growing up, Sesar listened to practically every type of music, and was introduced to a gumbo of grooves and styles. Whether it was rock, jazz, country, or even death metal, Ben looked for things that were musical, and clung to them.

Cut to nine years ago. After playing all forms of rock 'n' roll for twenty years, the drummer scored a try-out with then up & coming country artist Brad Paisley. Prior to the audition, Sesar learned Paisley's music, but when he got a chance to play, it was to country covers. Sesar didn't really know the songs, but with the help of the bass player, who'd suggest, "Play a train beat..play a shuffle," Sesar locked in and played from his heart. In the end Paisley announced, "That's my drummer."

Today Sesar has not only toured throughout the country superstar's ascendancy, he's also recorded every track on Paisley's past five albums, a rare feat for country touring drummers.

Born and raised in New Jersey, Sesar not only puts across a classic Jersey vibe (think Max Weinberg meets George Clooney), he also possesses a Jersey work ethic. He studies, he learns, and he *listens*. No, Ben doesn't look like a Nashville cat—nor does he really aspire to be one. Though he's constantly taking in the nuances of his adopted genre, he's stayed true to himself all the while.

While talking to Ben Sesar, one thing is immediately obvious: He has a passionate soul for drumming, and that's why he's in tune with country music.

MD: What do you bring to this country gig from your rock 'n' roll days?

Ben: Mostly the charisma and the spirit of rock, and also some of the big hitting. When I was a kid playing drums, all I had was this core of untapped passion for playing. As I got older, my playing became more refined as I learned technique and dynamics, but that core never went away. For my entire life, my core has involved being aggressive and even a little cocky. I learned to be sensitive and deep. All of those things have come together and become a huge part of my playing in both genres.

It's sort of the same mojo that Buddy Rich had. Honestly, I can't play anything that Buddy did, but he was on record saying that he didn't like rock music but that he played in the spirit of rock music. He totally had the heart of a rock player. He was on the edge and was always going for it. He played hard, he made faces.

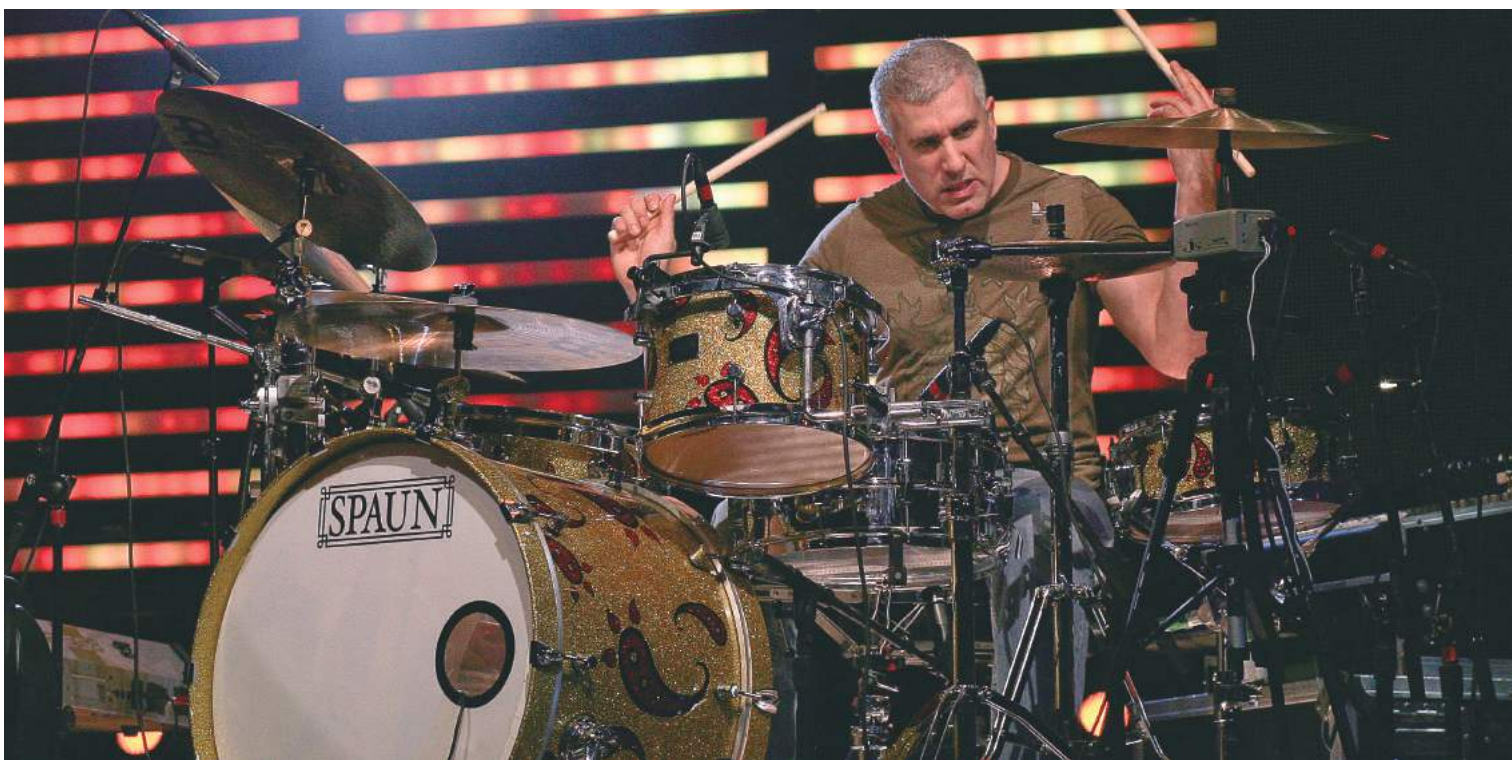
True country drumming isn't about heavy-handedness or recklessness; it's about safety and a strict interpretation of the quarter note, as well as sensitivity and patience. The hard part is balancing the strict discipline of the traditional aspects of Brad's music with the heavier, louder, reckless elements that he requires from his band. It's that balancing act that makes sitting in this chair so unique and challenging.

MD: What about attitude?

Ben: There's a rock 'n' roll attitude underlying most of Brad's music. My job in this band is to try to tame a wild horse. Our sound is a mixture of Nashville slickness and a certain recklessness. That's hard to manage. For me, I can't let him go too far out there. It's a lot to tame.

MD: When you got the gig, what did you think of country music?

Ben: I thought that it was musical and intelligent. I've always felt that you're the sum of all your influences and everything you've ever heard. If it's good, it's musical. I



don’ t even think in terms of genres, I’ m just a fan of music. I’ ll fit the drumming into that.

You have to remember that country music is not a drum-driven music. You have to first become a fan of it; I immersed myself in the genre. It’ s a beautiful style. It’ s either done right or it’ s done wrong.

MD: What do you bring to the genre?

Ben: All of my influences. This genre has really evolved. In the ’ 60s, country music didn’ t even feature a drumset. There would only be a lot of rimclicks. I think that’ s good, though, because you can say a lot with that space.

MD: So less is more?

Ben: It’ s that and then more. I love it. It’ s not focusing on the note attacks, but rather on what’ s between the notes and how I can stretch them. There’ s a way to play where you make the singer feel comfortable. I bring a respect of the genre while working within my own framework.

Drummers need to learn how to play on purpose, not just riding a total out-of-control wave. Every space you leave needs to have a purpose in the song. You don’ t just accidentally rush or drag. When I point to the middle of this napkin, it’ s easy to do. But point to the center of this room and it becomes harder. The more space you leave, the harder it is. In country music there are a lot of slower ballads. Any time they throw one at me, it takes me a bit outside of my comfort zone.

MD: In country music the touring drummer isn’ t usually the guy in the studio laying down the tracks.

Ben: It all comes back to Brad. He’ s a player. He knows what it’ s like to have childhood dreams. His were fulfilled. He was just on the cover of Guitar Player magazine, which was a thrill for him. He’ s the leader of this whole production, but he’ s still very humbled by those types of things. He wants that same

“Over the years I’ve learned that almost none of my normal home practice transfers to the live show. You simply don’t play the same way in your house that you do in the moment.”

thing for his friends. If you're not Brad's friend, that's your fault.

Brad never sells his soul, and there's a lot of strength in that. Whether it's a producer, a musician, or me, he basically dictates who he wants on his records. He'll tell the record company that he wants certain people, and if they don't like it he'll say, "Then we don't need to make the record." That's the opposite of how most everyone else in this industry is.

MD: What's your approach in the studio?

Ben: I'm not a normal studio player. I'm on the edge when I'm in there. I don't come in with a bag of tricks, but when I'm in the moment there has to be a cockiness about the playing. I can't worry if the producer doesn't like it. There's an attitude that goes into it, which I feel reflects the parts.

I've always felt my playing reflects a jazz attitude. I'm a fan of guys like Buddy Rich, Stewart Copeland, John Bonham, Kenny Aronoff, and Steve Gadd. They always automatically start at a level of excellence with every hit.

MD: How do you prepare for a studio date?

Ben: Since most of time we're using click tracks, I like to do things that strengthen my timing. Much like a weightlifter adds resistance to grow muscle, you can "weigh down" your sense of time in a similar fashion. I program a simple eight-bar loop—four bars of click and four bars of space—and I'll play simple patterns against that at medium tempos. During the four bars of silence, I try to maintain steady time by internalizing the pulse. That exercise is nothing new, but I take it to another level by stretching the four bars of silence to eight, sixteen, thirty-two, and eventually sixty-four. Then I slow the tempo to 40 bpm, repeat the process, and then begin to add fills. This way I'm able to see what my tendencies are, and correct them.

I also do a lot with beat displacement. I'll take the first couple of melody pages from Gary Chester's New Breed book, and displace all the notes over by a 16th note, while playing to the click. I'll repeat that while adding the four-, eight-, and sixteen-bar spaces. That's definitely weightlifting for your inner clock.

MD: Talk about your studio sound.

Ben: On this last record, 5th Gear, I used big open drums, tuned low, with no muffling. The tone was open and throaty, reminiscent of a lot of the old rock records. We even used RotoToms on a couple of tracks. We were trying to incorporate the old Alex Van Halen tom sound he had on songs like "Jump" or "I'll Wait," which is very outside the box for a Nashville studio session.

MD: Throughout the records you conjure up a lot of different vibes, from sweaty blues and shuffles to two-steppin'.

Ben: I'm a fan of all of those different styles. It makes it easy. I don't have to think about it a bit, because it's burned into my brain.

MD: Earlier you talked about leaving a lot of space. I hear that on the cut "It Did."

Ben: On that tune I was allowed to lead with the big 8th notes. There's just one spot where it's all 8th notes, and it builds very powerfully. The tone is so great and so smooth that I couldn't even believe it was

BEN'S KIT

Drums: Spaun, in custom paisley print lacquer
- **A.** 5x12 wood snare
- **B.** 14" main snare (various models: wood, metal, vintage)
- **C.** 8x12 tom
- **D.** 10x14 tom
- **E.** 13x16 tom
- **F.** 16x24 bass drum

Cymbals: Meinl
1. 18" Byzance Traditional medium crash
2. 13" Byzance Dark hi-hats
3. 20" Soundcaster Custom medium ride
4. 19" Byzance Traditional medium-thin crash
5. 14" Byzance Traditional medium Soundwave hi-hat
6. 20" Byzance Traditional medium crash
7. 18" China

Hardware: A combination of Pearl, Tama, and DW. According to Ben, "I prefer not having a hardware endorsement in order to pick and choose." Tama Iron Cobra hi-hat stand and bass drum pedal (with DW beater, spring tension as tight as possible)

Heads: Aquarian Texture Coated single-ply on snare batter, Clear snare-side (medium-high tuning, no mufffling), Texture Coated single-ply on tom batters with Clear single-ply on bottoms (medium to low tuning, no muffling), Force I on bass drum batter with Super-Kick on front (small hole, pillow for muffling)

Sticks: Vater Power 5B

Electronics: Mackie 16-channel mixer, Alesis SR-16 (for click track)

Microphones: Shure SM 57 on top and bottom of snare, SM 91 on kick, Sennheiser 604 on toms

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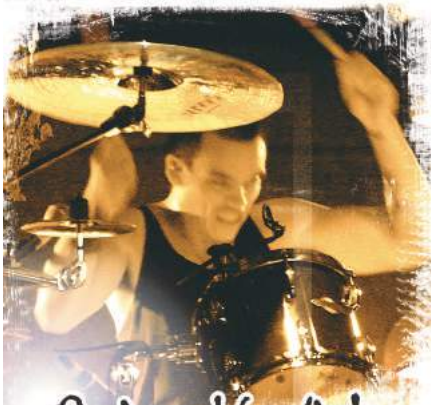
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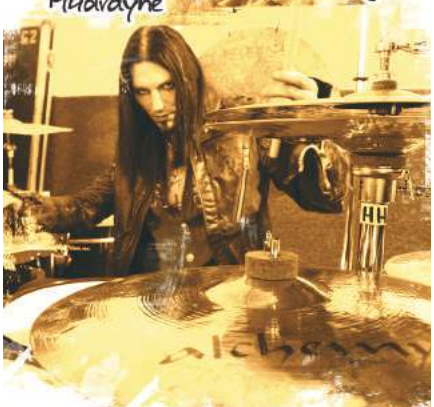
10 Years

Matt McDonough
Mudvayne

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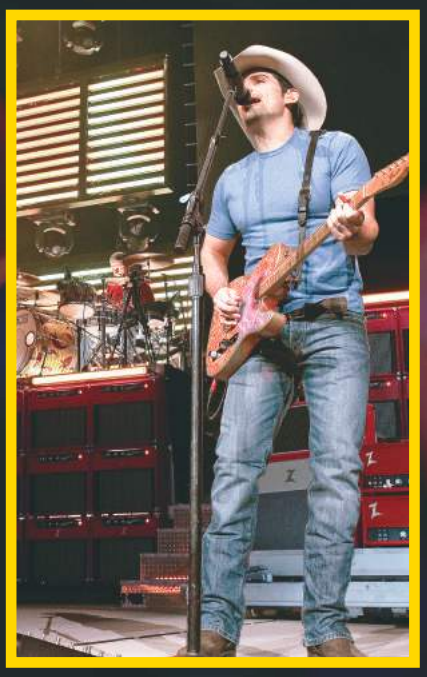
BRAD ON BEN

Brad Paisley has nine number-1 singles and has sold over ten million records. But he still has the credibility of a musician's musician. Paisley's persona is opposite of the overproduced Nashville slickness that often dominates the charts. He's a "genuine picker" whose guitar playing skills have been described as "Eddie Van Halen on cornbread." We asked this talented player for his thoughts on his drummer, Ben Sesar.

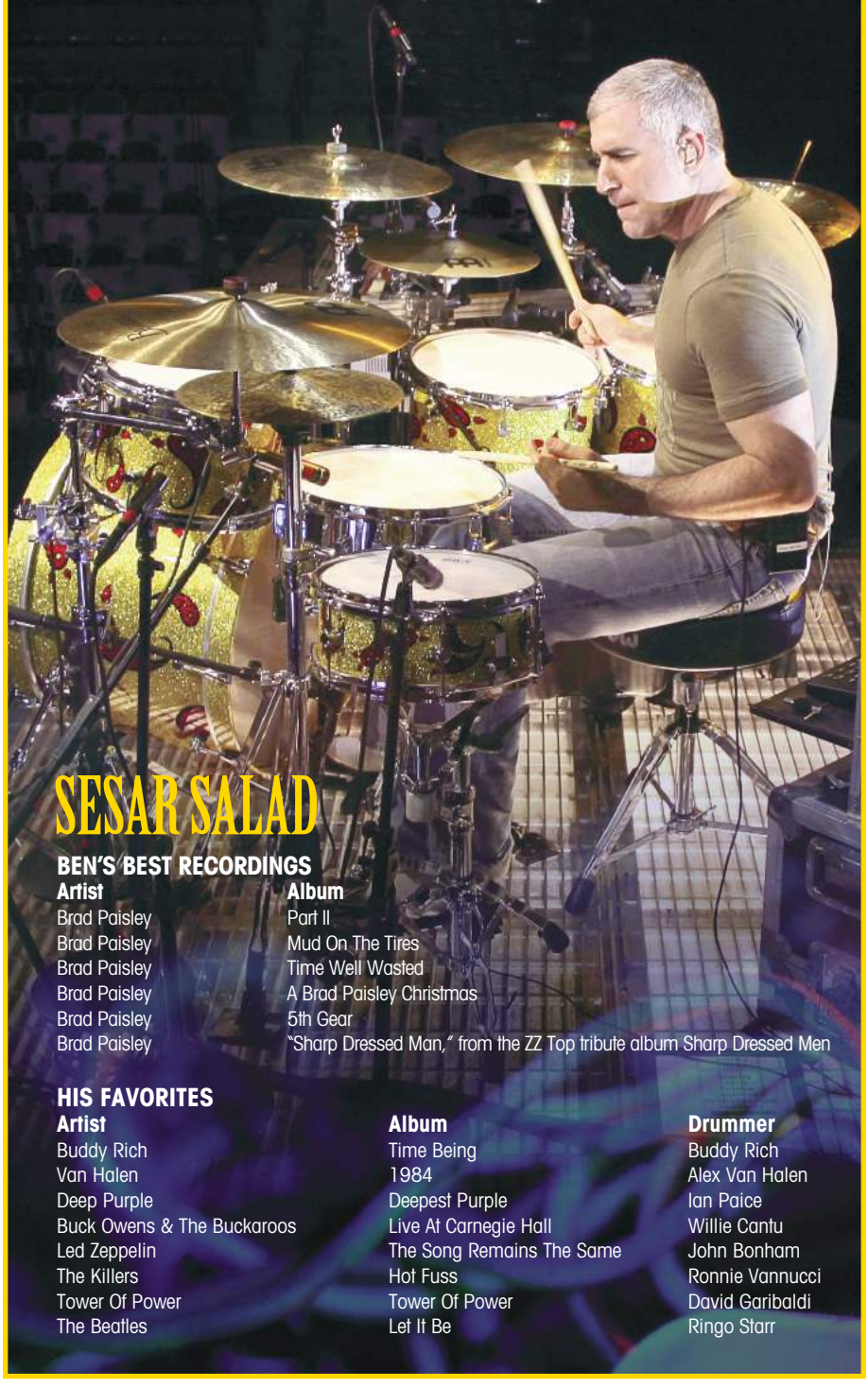


MD: What are your impressions of Ben as a drummer?
Brad: Ben came into our first rehearsal and sat down, and what I heard then are the same things I hear every night, nine years later. He has an ability to apply vast musical knowledge to his playing, without sacrificing the feel, or the heart and soul that seems present in every song he plays.
MD: What about live?
Brad: Ben marries technicality with a very deep groove. I'm one of the luckiest artists on the road to have someone with that ability. I contend to this day that he is absolutely the best drummer I've ever played with. He's an incredibly important part of my records, my live shows, and my overall sound. When Ben is playing a song, it grooves, no doubt about it, every time.
MD: What does he bring to the studio?
Brad: I like for my records to be different from the normal Nashville fare, in that my band is always a large part of the recording process. Ben is the bedrock for me. It all starts with the drums, and I'm able to make unique records because I've got a guy who cares about the music almost as much as I do.

Ben is a million times more effective than a "hired gun" who will come in and play the song once. And technically, he's just as proficient as any of those other guys. •

me during playback.
MD: "She's Everything" breathes as well.
Ben: That one took a lot of patience because the cut is so ridiculously slow. You have to feel patience in microscopic doses to hold yourself back, especially when you're playing with a click. It feels like a million bucks when you figure out your riffs in a song like that.

A lot of times I'll play the snare just a tad behind. People talk about the concept of playing behind the beat, but it's only behind in relation to something that's completely on. If you play everything behind, it all falls back. So I play the kick on the beat and phrase the snare back a bit. That's very purposeful stuff.
MD: "Letter To Me" has a different feel to it.
Ben: When I heard that song I thought, What would Steve Gadd do? So I did my best Gadd impression. He'd probably do it differently, but it still came out exactly like I wanted it to. It's not a particularly "drummy" track; it's not laced with flash or dazzling technique. The groove is very patient, and all of the fills are perfectly timed and placed. It has the most purposeful use of space of any track I've done.
MD: I noticed you use loops on "Ticks."
Ben: We wanted to do some loop stuff without actually using loops. So we took a Radio Shack condenser microphone that you'd use for an old Panasonic tape recorder, put it in the room, and recorded a lo-fi drum part on it. We put a towel over the snare, and after the beginning section, we used RotoToms, which I had to dust off from being in my closet since the seventh grade. It's basically the '80s, Alex Van Halen type of thing. It reminded me of playing "I'll Wait" back in the cover days. It was a totally different approach for us.
MD: It sounds like the instrumental cut "Time Warp" is 350 beats per minute.
Ben: It's actually 400 bpm. It took a few takes just to get the form of the song, partly because they didn't have the song completed yet. By the time we were able to do one real take, my hands were bleeding. I had to tape them up. We did that track in thirds. We would track it until someone would fall apart and start from there. It sounds like the piano is sped up on the song, but it's not.
MD: You change the time within the song.
Ben: It's basically metric modulation. Even though the song is 400 bpm, it's basically cut into thirds. The click track never stops, but it's so fast that we took the regular pulse and turned it into sixths.
MD: We talked about studio preparation. What



SESAR SALAD

BEN'S BEST RECORDINGS

Artist	Album
Brad Paisley	Part II
Brad Paisley	Mud On The Tires
Brad Paisley	Time Well Wasted
Brad Paisley	A Brad Paisley Christmas
Brad Paisley	5th Gear
Brad Paisley	"Sharp Dressed Man," from the ZZ Top tribute album Sharp Dressed Men

HIS FAVORITES

Artist	Album	Drummer
Buddy Rich	Time Being	Buddy Rich
Van Halen	1984	Alex Van Halen
Deep Purple	Deepest Purple	Ian Paice
Buck Owens & The Buckaroos	Live At Carnegie Hall	Willie Cantu
Led Zeppelin	The Song Remains The Same	John Bonham
The Killers	Hot Fuss	Ronnie Vannucci
Tower Of Power	Tower Of Power	David Garibaldi
The Beatles	Let It Be	Ringo Starr

about going on tour?

Ben: Tours pose high-energy demands. I focus largely on playing technique. I used to come home from touring with massive blisters on my hands, so to eliminate friction, I started practicing loosening my grip on the sticks at high volumes. I practice things like the Moeller technique, to get the most out of the natural energy of the sticks and pedals. That really reduces the amount of effort I put forth. Mostly it' s about getting out of the way of myself. That frees me to play whatever I want easier and more relaxed.

MD: What' s your attraction to Spaun drums?

Ben: They' re handmade in their entirety and have a simple elegance in their look. Spaun has worked with me to create and customize my drums. And I' ve always appreciated their versatility and the extremely wide tuning range. They hold their tuning unbelievably well. I' m often able to sit down, the day after a pounding show, and not even have to adjust the tension. It' s because their lug design is the most simple and superior I' ve seen.

MD: How about cymbals?

Ben: I use Meinl. Everything about them is consistent–their quality and their tone. Their Byzance line is fantastic. You can get them to sound old, new, or even quirky. I' m a huge

Jimmy Cobb Model
L 16" D .595" • L 40.64 cm D 1.51 cm
Designed by the Jazz Legend, Jimmy's model measures in between a 5A and a 5B in the grip. Features a long taper to a medium sized teardrop tip for warm and defined cymbal tones. A "quick" feeling jazz stick.

Jazz Ride
L 16" D .575" • L 40.64 cm D1.46 cm
Slightly over a 5A in the grip. Long taper to a small teardrop tip for a great ride cymbal sound, response and definition.

Sugar Maple Super Jazz
L 16 1/4" D 555" • L 41.28 cm D 1.41 cm
A Maple version of Vater's popular Super Jazz model for a lighter feel. Jazz Style grip, under a 5A, with a little extra length and long taper.

SD9
L 16 1/4" D 610" • L 41.28 cm D 1.55cm
Just over a 5B in the grip with an oval tip. Comfortable to the "5B player" who needs just a little extra length.

Sugar Maple SD9
L 16 1/4" D 610" • L 41.28 cm D 1.55cm
Just over a 5B in the grip with an oval tip. A fast playing stick that is great for Jazz.

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fan of the older sound, and that line is especially authentic. They also tend to "give" a little more than normal cymbals, without denting or breaking as often as others I've had.

MD: How about sticks?

Ben: I use Vater. I've never picked up a pair and had them break on me the first time. They wear really evenly as well. I use the Power 5Bs. They're a little longer with a nice taper and bead.

MD: Is there anything else that defines your sound?

Ben: I have a nice collection of vintage gear. I'll use it occasionally in the studio. I really love old snares. I absolutely love the sound of the two-piece heavy brass shells from the '20s and '30s. I've got quite a few of those in various sizes, as well as the coveted Black Beauty. I own a smattering of vintage wood drums, such as the single-ply, steam-bent Radio King, as well as Jazz Festival snares from the '60s.

MD: Let's talk about how your drumming has evolved over the years.

Ben: I've played matched grip all my life, but during a four-month layoff I switched to traditional. That gave me a whole other perspective. I always thought that switching to traditional meant losing power. It's not that way at all. It opened up my playing so much more. I found that the ergonomics of playing matched was tight and my elbows were up. With traditional I felt like I could play my backbeats much better, and it opened up my style much more. I have lots of room to time everything.

Playing drums is like archery; you're trying to hit the middle. I'm always looking for new ways to create more depth and space in the music, as opposed to simply chugging along.

MD: What are some things you've learned from musicians in Nashville?

Ben: Eddie Bayers is a master. He recorded some tracks with Brad, and it showed me that I had more wiggle room in the studio. I listened to his tracks with the click and I heard how much they breathed. They sounded great in the control room, but they still breathed. I learned how to relax, and that playing drums in the studio isn't supposed to be clinical.

A few years ago I made friends with Jim Heffernan, who played steel guitar with Brad for years. He was basically a country music historian, and he knew all the stuff and all the players. I came in and I was a rock guy trying to fit into a country thing. I knew I was green. Jim took me under his wing and said, "Let me show you where you're going wrong here." I was humble enough to learn from him.

Jim was hard on me, and even though he wasn't a drummer, he knew the style. Jim told me, "You have this raw core of passion, but it's not tamed for this genre." I went home and became introspective and tried to improve. I worked on improving dynamically because I wasn't being sensitive enough. And I was playing the shuffle all wrong, because a country shuffle is different from a blues shuffle. I was just splashing it too much. I learned to still play with authority but to tighten up the voices.

MD: How do you stay current?

Ben: I've changed the way I think about practicing. Over the years, I've learned that almost none of my normal home practice transfers to the live show. You simply don't play the same way in your house that you do in the moment. You don't hear the same, either. It's easy for your technique to go out the window when you're playing for 15,000 people. Varying conditions like hot temperatures, inconsistencies in the monitor mix, and heightened adrenaline can lead to over-compensating. For me, that results in the loss of technique to play freely and accurately.

MD: Why would drummers care about your style?

Ben: I have a unique touch, which naturally brings out a unique tone. I like how on the records you can really hear the heads stretch when I hit backbeats.

I've learned that there's a freedom that comes from being confident in my playing. A lot of younger guys are insecure. Everything with them is about trying to be cool or act a certain way. When you drop all of that and have nothing to prove, you'll play your best.

MD: What's the best way for drummers to differentiate themselves from the pack?

Ben: If you're talking about pop music and drumming, nobody is playing anything new at all. We're all recycling the same stuff. What makes a drummer unique, what gives someone a personal touch, is the way he uses dynamics, and the vibe he brings to the table. Simple as that.

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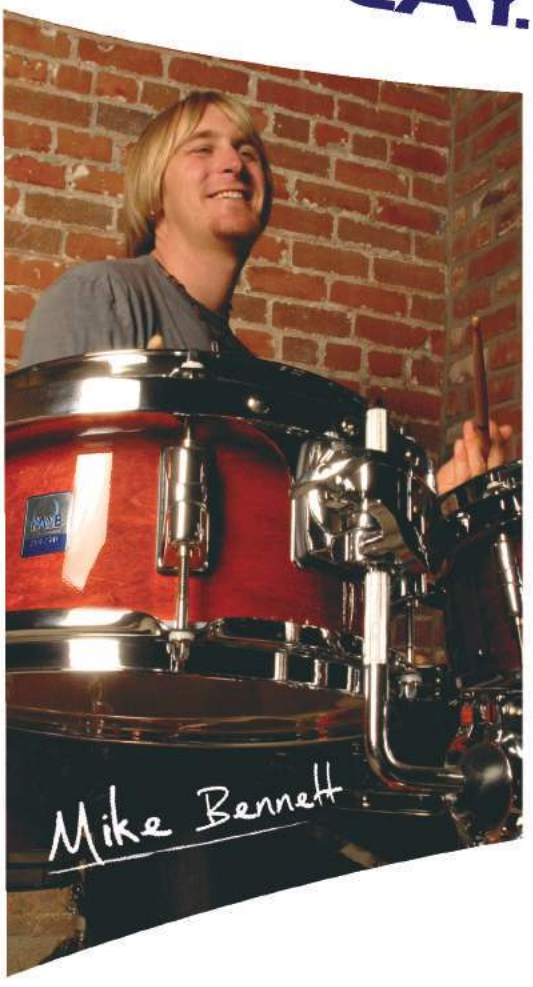

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Feet Beat

A Look At Drummers' Footwear

by Cheech Iero

Foot technique has always been an integral part of a drummer's playing, but never more so than today. Speed, power, and creativity with the feet have become as essential as with the hands.

However, while only a few drummers wear anything on their hands while playing, most do wear something on their feet. What that something is varies according to musical requirements and personal preferences.

Anatomy 101

Understanding why footwear is important begins with understanding the anatomy of the foot. It's a highly complex mechanism, containing twenty-six bones, thirty-three joints, and three arches.

The main arch—called the plantar arch—runs lengthwise and touches the ground at the ball of the foot and at the heel. Thick pads of fat located at both ends of the plantar arch assist in absorbing shock. The metatarsal arch runs crosswise under the instep, and the lateral arch runs lengthwise along the outer portion of the foot. These arches are maintained by bones and ligaments. They "give" when weight is placed on the foot, and they spring back when the weight is lifted off. If the tendons and ligaments of the foot are weakened, the arches will sometimes fall.

Foot movements are generally combined with ankle movements, and are controlled by a strong intercrossing of ligaments and muscles. Both the foot and the ankle provide stability and mobility—critical elements of foot technique in drumming.

What The Pros Wear

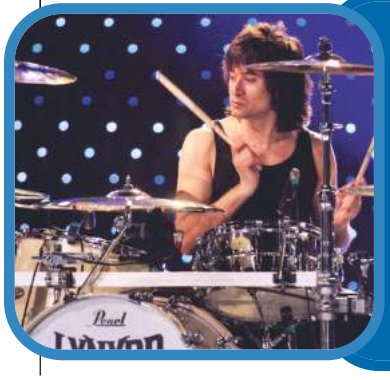
Because drummers come in all shapes and sizes, and because they play widely differing musical styles, it's not surprising that they wear different shoes. Here are footwear preferences from a panel of pros. Hopefully, their comments will help you to determine the best type of shoe for your own playing needs.

Bobby Sanabria (Ascención, Latin Master)

I play drums in whatever shoes I'm wearing at the moment. They just have to be comfortable and stylish, and obviously they can't constrict the movement of my feet or legs.

When I played at the 2006 Modern Drummer Festival I wore a pair of Skechers Industrial slip-ons, in black. They look like work boots but are cut down to the ankle so they slip on. They have a thick rubber slip-resistant sole. I'm always changing the position of my feet on the pedals, so I don't want the shoes to grip. I just want them to stay where I put them on the pedals.

Sneakers are popular with drummers, but you're not going to be able to wear them in a formal setting where you have to wear a tux, or in a jazz group where the leader wants everyone to dress sharp. Jazz drummers have always worn just plain dress shoes. As long as they're comfortable, you'll be able to deal. Just don't forget to shine them. That way, when you sit at the kit ready to kick ass, you do it with class.



Michael Cartellone (Lynyrd Skynyrd)

I've worn the same type of shoes for the past thirty years: leather and canvas lace-up wrestling shoes with soft rubber soles. I currently wear Asics, but I've also used Nikes and Adidas.

Wrestling shoes have no arch support, but that isn't a problem for me since I play heel up. With the wrestling shoes my foot is very close to the pedal and feels very connected to it—almost like playing barefoot, but with support in the ankle. So whatever my foot can do relates to the response I get from the pedal, without a lot of shoe in the way. No big clunky shoes for me. If I wore them, I'd play big, clunky drums.

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Bernard Purdie (Studio/R&B Great)

My feet are flat because of wearing bad shoes with no arch support early in life. Once I got an arch support, I immediately felt the difference. Now I always wear dress shoes with leather soles, for performing and regular day wear. The Bali, Church, or Boston brands are usually my preference. I find they have the best leather with strong arch supports.

It' s irrelevant to me whether the shoe is a tie model or a slip-on, as long as it has leather soles and soft leather uppers. The leather allows me to feel the vibration of the pedals, so that my foot and the pedal become one. I' m referring to both bass drum and hi-hat pedals. I play flat-footed to create light subtleties in the music, and I' ll go up on my toes for volume and speed. So it' s imperative that the leather of the shoes is soft and flexible, not hard and stiff.

Margie Barbee

SELECTING SHOES

Fashion and appearance are considerations when it comes to choosing footwear, but ill-fitting shoes are likely to cause problems over time. Fortunately, there are companies that manufacture comfortable "work" shoes that are virtually indistinguishable from regular shoes. Additionally, inexpensive shoe inserts are available to provide arch support and shock absorption.

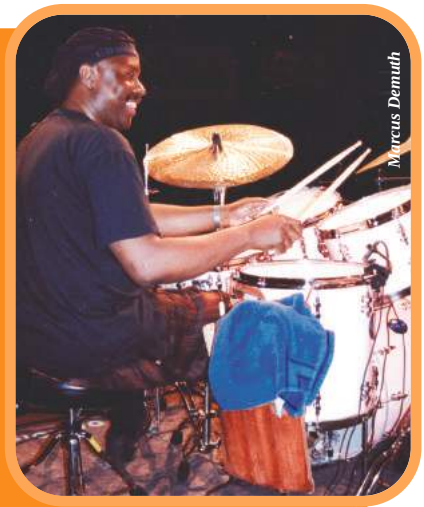
When selecting shoes, keep in mind that sizes can vary among different brands and styles. Judge your shoes by their comfort, not by the size marked on the box. Have both feet measured, because most people have one foot slightly larger than the other. It's best to fit to the largest foot, and to do so at the end of the day when your feet are larger. Be sure the toe area of the shoe has enough room to allow the toes to move freely, and that the shoe is flexible enough so your heel does not rub on the collar around the heel pocket as it lifts up in the shoe.

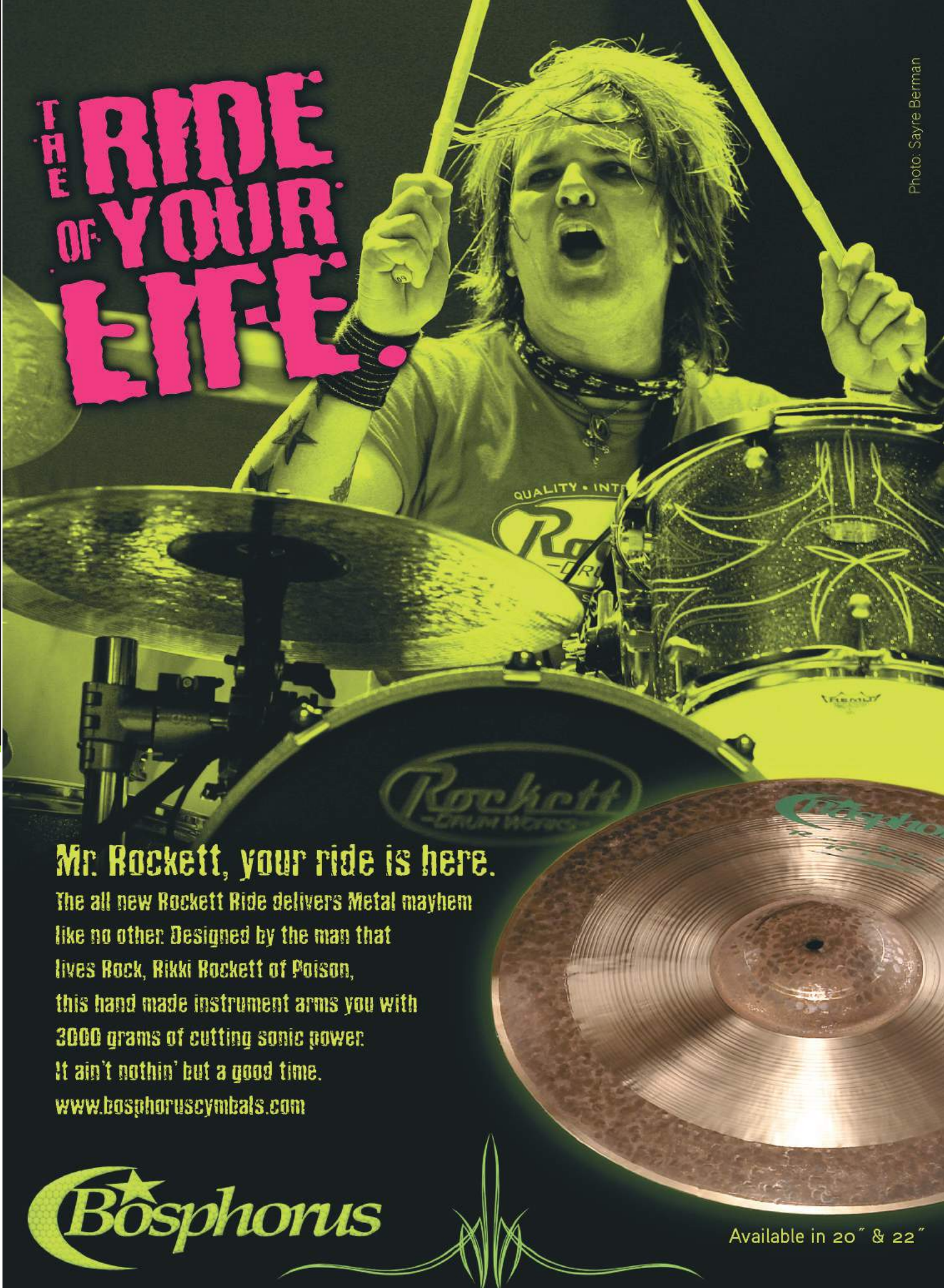
Your feet have more sweat glands per square inch than any other part of your body, so sufficient air circulation is important to keep them healthy. Additionally, moisture, friction, and heat combine to break down the materials inside shoes, so the "breatheability" of a shoe is important to its own longevity. You should also wear socks that absorb moisture, such as those made of wool, cotton, or a mixture of the two.

Lenny White (Fusion Legend)

My fellow drummers and I have worn some interesting footwear over the years. Back in the early ' 70s I saw Miles Davis and Tony Williams wear platform shoes with heels, so I tried it too. It wasn' t a problem to play in them—although Mike Clark told me he saw Tony with a bass drum pedal that had a bicycle stirrup on it, I guess to keep his foot in place. In the mid-' 70s we played in Capezio dance shoes. They were light and felt great on your feet. In the ' 90s Dennis Chambers turned me on to some athletic shoes called Otomix that were very comfortable and looked good.

It' s important to feel comfortable, but you also have to respect the person whose bandstand you' re on. You can' t wear an athletic shoe in a formal setting. So I' ve found footwear for different settings. In Europe I found a pair of Nike surf shoes that are the most comfortable shoes I have. For more formal settings, I have a pair of Louis Vitton loafers that are almost as comfortable as the Nikes but are unmatched in style. They both look and feel great.


Marcus Demuth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Jeff Hamilton
(Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, Diana Krall)

I usually wear a slip-on dress loafer. Wide, flat-toed styles don't fit up into the brackets of the bass drum pedal. I prefer a more rounded toe. The heel adds leverage.

The brand isn't critical, but the shoes have to have leather soles and uppers. I don't use rubber-soled shoes because I can't "feel" the pedals and I can't slide on them. I play flat-footed on the bass drum pedal, and both flat-footed and heel-up on the hi-hat. I bruise my hi-hat foot from time to time, even with shoes on. So playing in stocking feet doesn't work for me.

Mike Tracy

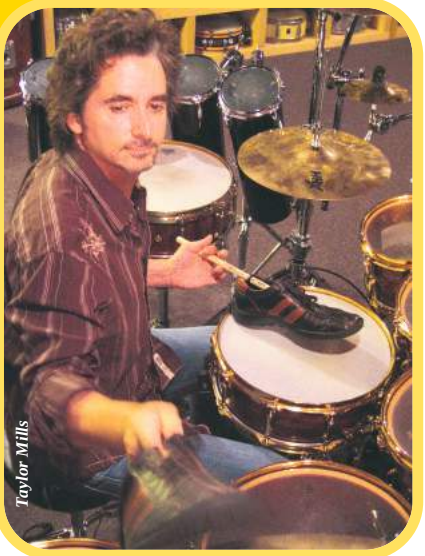
Terri Lyne Carrington (Jazz Great)

I play flat-footed for light jazz or when I'm playing softly, and heel-up for more power or groove stuff. I dislike any type of heel or hard shoes. I normally like to play in flat shoes with rubber soles, because they're more flexible. The rubber soles work well for quick double strokes with the right foot. The brand of my footwear varies, but Aerosole with rubber uppers is always good. Whether or not there are arch supports doesn't matter much to me. I can wear either laced or slip-on styles, but the shoes are usually not laced, for stylistic reasons.

Tracy Love

Todd Sucherman (Styx)

I've played enough weddings and parties in my younger days to be able to play in anything, but it's really about being comfortable in shoes that don't hold me back musically or hurt me physically. They should feel natural to the point that I'm not even thinking about them. For the past few years I've worn Skechers, in a leather sneaker style with laces. I like a fairly soft, thin sole, but not as thin as wrestling shoes. I also like a bit of support. I'll use a pair on the road until I damn near look like a hobo, and then it's time for new shoes.


Taylor Mills

Bob Bryar
(My Chemical Romance)

I've been wearing Asics Tigers for about five years. They have a jagged rubber-sole bottom, which, in combination with grip tape on my footboards, gives me a lot of grip, with no sliding at all. There are no arch supports; I've never tried them.

The upper parts of the shoes are made of mesh, with laces. My shoes make my feet feel light, allowing me to play with less effort. I don't like to wear dressy shoes. They're usually heavy and slippery, which is the opposite of what I need. As a matter of fact, when I'm not playing, I like to wear slippers.

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Riley Breckenridge (Thrice)

Ideally I' d prefer to play barefoot, but my feet would fall apart. So my goal was to find a shoe that was virtually as comfortable as being barefoot. I now use Nike Free 5.0 Running/Training shoes, in the LA Lakers' colors.

The shoes come with two insoles. I prefer the one with more arch support because my feet get very sore and tired in low-arched shoes. The soles are made of a very lightweight rubber called phylite, and are incredibly flexible. The uppers are made of open mesh, reinforced with lightweight, vented leather overlays. They' re very breathable.

Frees are essentially slip-ons, with laces for support. They' re definitely a " function over fashion" kind of shoe. I love how their soles let me " feel" the pedals underneath me for better control. I think that added comfort has helped my pedal work. However, the shoes one wears might be more of a psychological advantage than anything else. I don' t like anything heavy with large soles—but I' ve seen drummers absolutely slay in steel-toed Doc Martens, so what do I know?

Dom Famularo (Master Clinician)

With my global travels, it' s important to keep my feet feeling energized. So I play in dress shoes that are comfortable to wear all day. They' re lace-up leather Rockports, with great arch supports and rubber soles that grab the pedals and help me control them more consistently.

Years ago I played in sneakers, but my feet would get tired in time. Some of my students like to play with bare feet. I don' t get that; my feet would be screaming. Remember, think " happy feet."

FEET DON'T FAIL ME NOW

Drummers use a wide variety of exercises to keep their hands limber and to build their chops. It's equally important to keep your feet flexible and in good condition. With that in mind, here are exercises recommended by the American Orthopedic Foot & Ankle Society.

The Toe Squeeze. Place small corks between your toes, and squeeze them ten times for approximately ten seconds each time.

Toe Point, Toe Raise, and Toe Curl. Repeat ten times each, holding each position for approximately ten seconds.

Toe Curl/Grab. Lay a towel on the floor. Using your curled toes, gather the towel and pull it towards you. Resistance can be increased by placing a weight on the end of the towel.

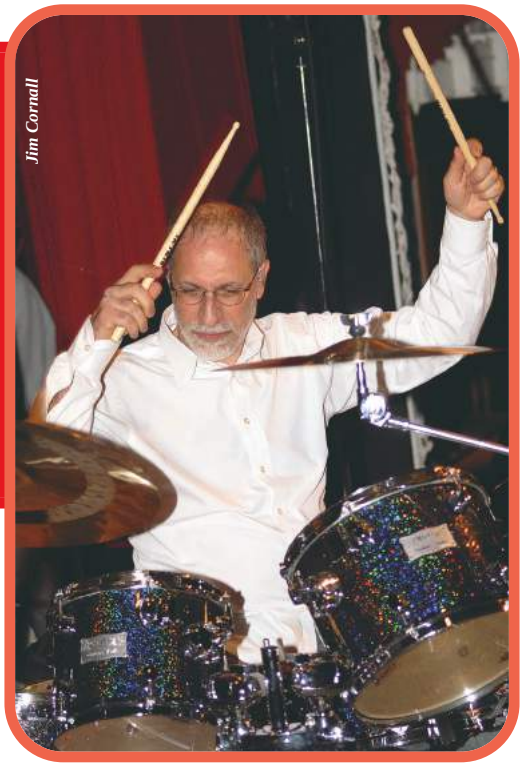
Marble Pick-Up. Pick marbles off the floor, one by one, by clenching your toes around them. Then place them in a bowl.

Toe Pulls. Place a rubber band across your toes to create resistance, then spread your toes outward. Repeat this ten times, holding the position for approximately ten seconds.

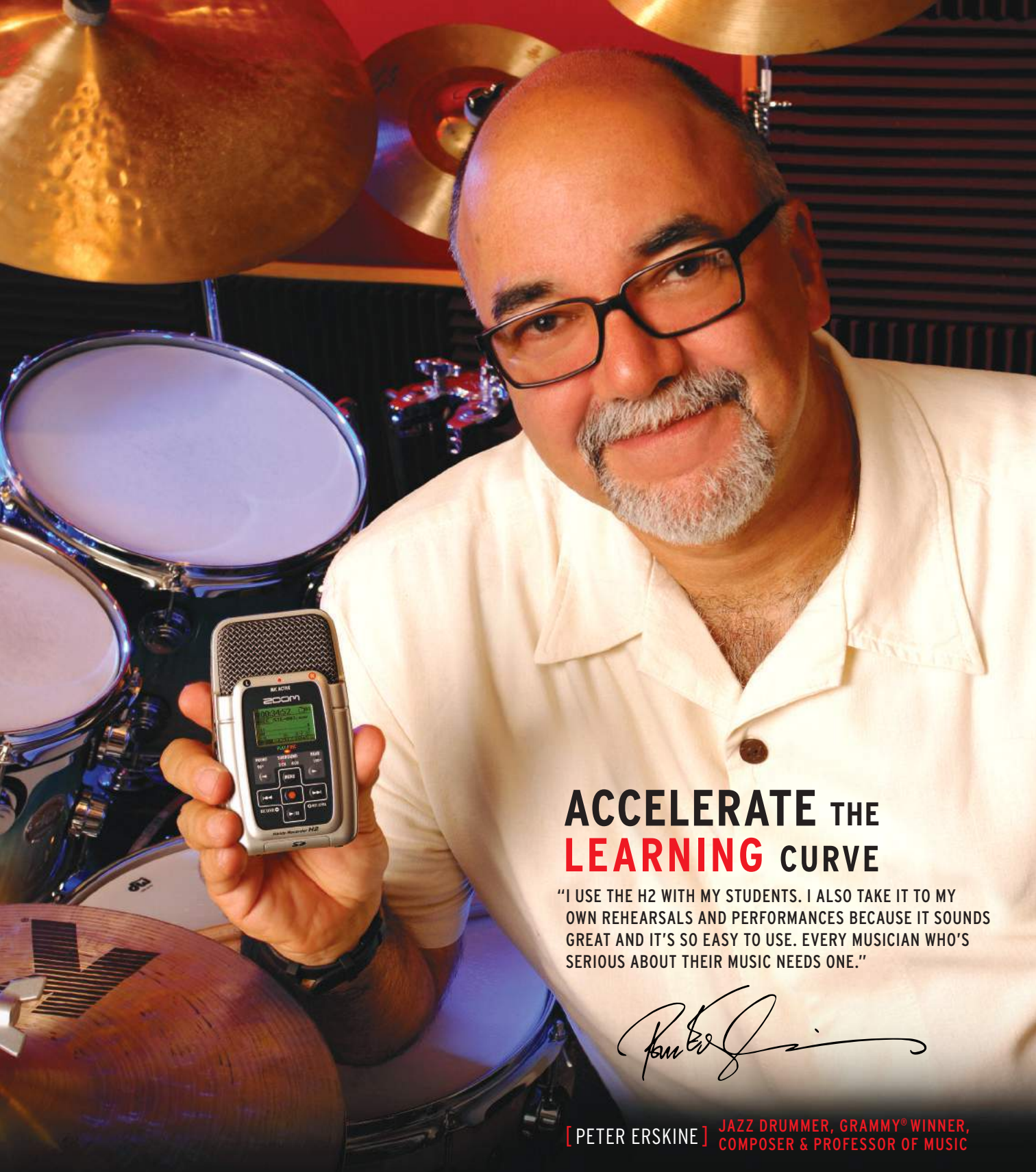
For feet and ankles. Place a thick rubber band around the big toes of each foot. Rotate your ankle outward, stretching the rubber band. Repeat ten times, holding the position for approximately ten seconds.

Golf Ball Roll. Roll a golf ball under each foot for an invigorating bottom-of-the-foot massage.

Walk In Sand. Whenever you're near the beach, walk barefoot in the soft, dry sand for an overall foot exercise.



Jim Cornall



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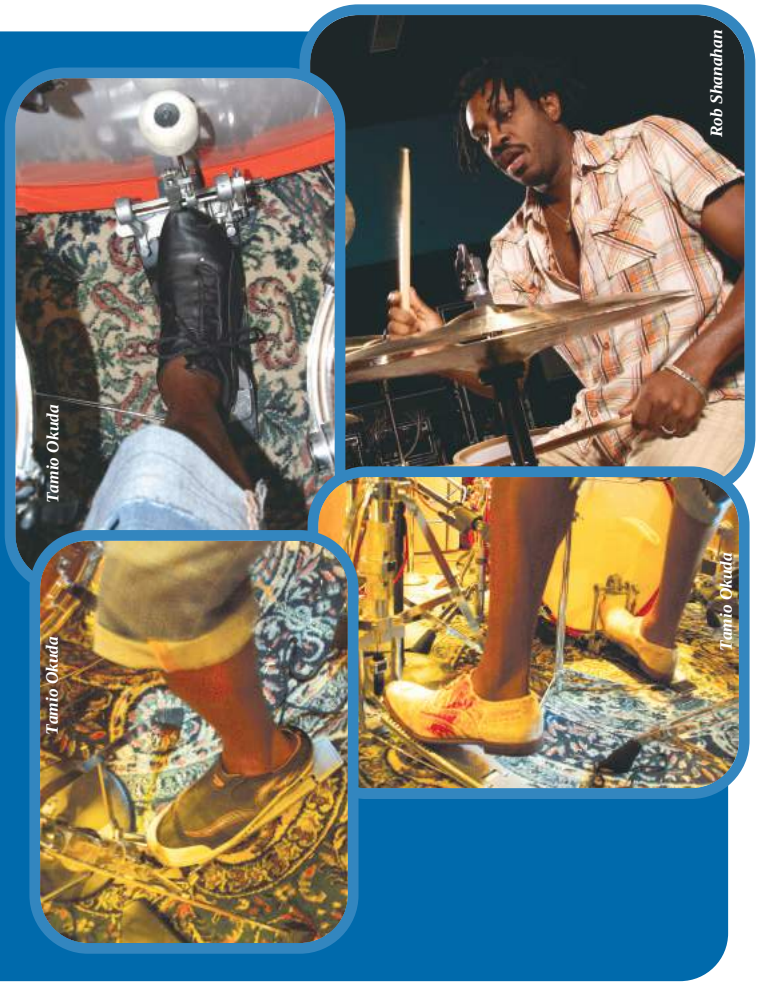
Steve Jordan
(Session And Touring Star)

My footwear has changed with each passing decade, due to changing views about style and comfort. There was a time when I had Capezios in every color, and I wore Freed Of London dance shoes as well as Tigers from Japan. Later there was such a British invasion that playing on stage in sneakers was a no can do. You had to have boots of some sort. So I was wearing Chelsea boots—until I didn' t feel like dealing with pain anymore. Then I went for comfort, and I played in sneakers—but sneakers that were kind of disguised, so they didn' t look like basketball shoes.

Today I sometimes wear Pumas, or boots that have rubber soles that are sleek and lightweight. If a boot is too thick or heavy, you won' t have flexibility around the instrument, or as much dynamics as you need. On the other hand, wearing a heavier shoe can give you that little extra " oomph."

Wearing the wrong shoe while playing can mess up your knees or your Achilles tendon, depending on where you generate the motion of your stroke. I play heel up...heel down...every possible way, on both the hi-hat and the bass drum. I like a light, soft shoe, and I' ll wear laced and slip-on styles. I don' t use arch supports.

For a short time I got into playing in my socks in the studio, which was almost like playing barefoot. I wanted to really feel the pedals. But that has changed now as well. I like to feel the instrument, but that' s usually more in the studio than it is live.



Chris Parker (Studio Master)

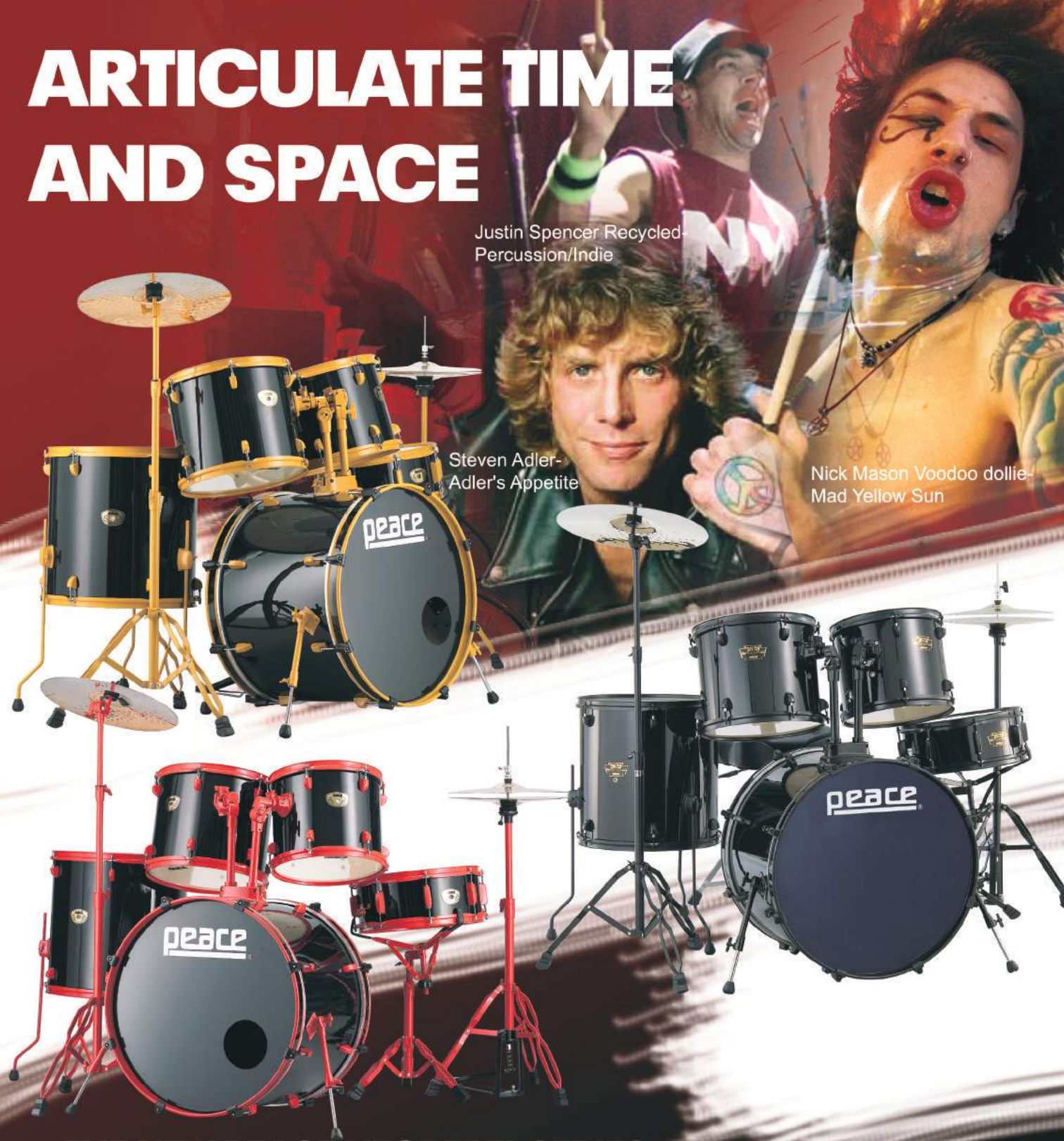
My current footwear is Merrells: thin, rubber-soled loafers with leather uppers. They have arch supports, because I' ve got one flat foot. (Disco did it!) These are strictly performance shoes; I don' t put them on until I' m sitting at the drums before the first downbeat.

My preference has changed often over my forty-year career. A music teacher I had in high school always stressed the need to " feel" the beat through your feet, so the thinner the soles, the better. Back then I had Capezio tap shoes, and I' d take them to a shoemaker to have a $^{1}/_{8}$" layer of lightly grained rubber added to the bottoms. The shoes had low heels already, and with that rubber added, I had a smooth feel on the pedals for the time-step kind of approach—sliding the foot forward on each stroke.

As time went on, drummers like Billy Cobham, Dennis Chambers, and Simon Phillips all seemed to be wearing running shoes for more ankle support and a sturdier feel on the pedals. I tried Nikes and Adidas, but the ultimate was a version from Japan called Cougars. These, too, went out of drumming style, and I turned to boots, like Roy Haynes and Tony Williams wore. Tony Lama cowboy boots or Frye slip-on boots were the choices, because you felt " on top of" the pedal, with a ton of ankle and leg support. Your feet also got warm fast—and stayed warm—which was good for circulation. The high heels kept your foot in the heel-up position for slammin' the bass drum pedal—without actually having to hold the heel up yourself—and the smooth leather soles slid easily back and forth to rock your foot on the hi-hat and to play samba feels on the bass drum.

I' ve had negative experiences trying to play in lace-up boots, or wingtip shoes, or anything that' s stiff from heel to toe. I play mostly heel-up, and I like some heel support to avoid bone bruises. The Merrells I mentioned earlier cover those requirements.

ARTICULATE TIME AND SPACE



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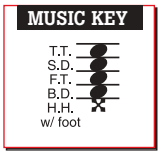
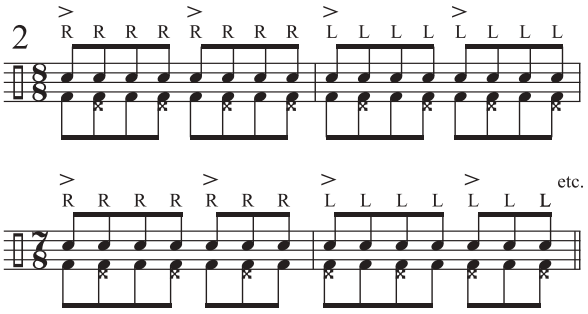


Two of the most important components of drumming are endurance and dynamic control between the hands. In this article, we' re going to take a look at a great hand exercise. Then we' ll apply it to the drumset in ways that will help improve your control and coordination.

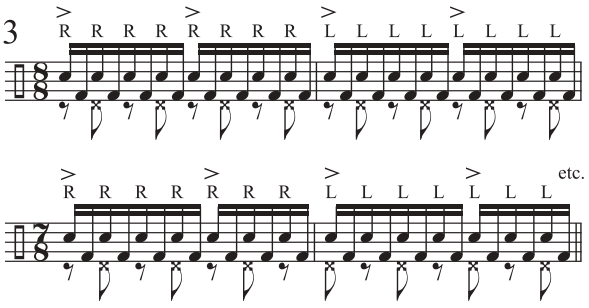
The exercises are based on a series of strokes with each hand that decrease from eight to one, and then increase back up to eight. On the first time through, disregard the accents and strive for a relaxed and even sound. You don' t want any interruptions in the flow as you move from phrase to phrase.

Here' s the exercise decreasing from eight strokes to one stroke per hand. Once you get to the end, reverse the pattern until you' re back to eight strokes. After you' ve mastered the exercises without the accents, add them back in. The accents will help you memorize and feel the odd-number phrases.

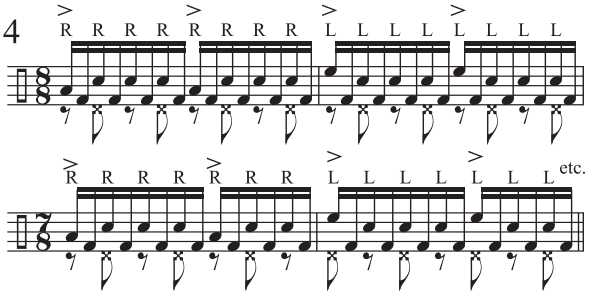
Now add the feet. Make sure you play the bass drum exactly in unison with the hands—no flams. The hi-hat plays on every other note, creating a 2-and-4 jazz feel. Note that in the odd-numbered measures, the hi-hat will flip over to the downbeat in the left-hand measures. Keep in the accents this time.



The next step is to play the bass drum between the snare notes, while keeping the hi-hat as it was before.



Now move the accented notes to the toms (right hand on floor tom, left hand on rack tom). The other strokes stay on the snare. The bass drum and hi-hat patterns are the same as before.



By practicing this routine consistently every day, you' ll soon see a significant difference in the amount of control and endurance in your playing. Have fun!

Christian Finger is a professional drummer living in New York. For more information, visit www.christianfinger.com.

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Ronald Bruner Jr., Jason McGerr, Aaron Spears, Teddy Campbell, Gerald Heyward, Marvin McQuitty, Glenn Kotche, Thomas Lang, Luis Conté, and Stewart Copeland

MD Festival 2006 - Sunday

6 Hours 30 Minutes • 2 Discs

Dave DiCenso, Bobby Sanabria, Brann Dailor, Mike Mangini, Danny Seraphine, and Steve Smith.

MD Festival 2005

Over 7 Hours • 3 Discs

Festival 2005 (Saturday): Jason Bittner, Rodney Holmes, Keith Carlock, Chad Smith & Ian Paice. Festival 2005 (Sunday): Chris Adler, Jojo Mayer, Zoro, Latin All Stars with Sheila E, Alex Acuna, Raul Rekow & Karl Perazzo, and Roy Haynes. Festival 2005 (Disc Three): In-depth interviews conducted with the artists at practice pad kits, detailed discussion and demonstrations, practice tips, and more!

MD Festival 2005
Chris Adler & Jason Bittner

2 Hours 35 Minutes • 1 Disc

Full-length performances and interviews from two incredible drummers, along with almost 30 minutes of additional performance and clinic footage not included on the Festival 2005 DVDs.

MD Festivals 2000 & 2003

Over 8 Hours • 3 Discs

Festival 2000 (Complete): Don Brewer, Vinnie Colaiuta, Horacio "El Negro" Hernanadez with Marc Quinones, Akira Jimbo, Paul Leim, Hilary Jones, Dave Lombardo, and Billy Ward. Festival 2003 (Saturday): Louis Santiago Jr., Hip Pickles, Nathaniel Townsley Trio, Matt Wilson and his band, Steve Smith and Vital Information, Mike Portnoy and Yellow Matter Custard, and The Drumbassadors. Festival 2003 (Sunday): Nick D'Virgilio, Antonio Sanchez, Airto Moreira, and Shawn Pelton & House of Diablo.

MD Festival 2000
Horacio Hernandez

Over 1 Hour • 1 Disc

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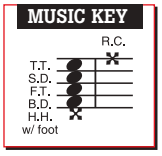
The Wayne Krantz Groove

Developing Dual-Limb Independence

by Eric Novod



One of the highlights of the past decade of New York City drumming has been the Wayne Krantz residency at the 55 Bar. (Krantz is a guitarist who toured with Steely Dan and Leni Stern, among many others.) During the latter years of his residency, which ended in June of ' 07, Steely Dan/Sting drummer Keith Carlock and Michel Camilo drummer Cliff Almond tore it up with Krantz whenever they were in town. World-renowned bassists, including Anthony Jackson, James Genus, and Lincoln Goines, often completed the Krantz trio lineup.

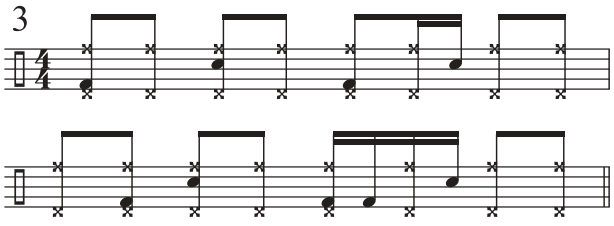
The following exercises are inspired by some of the things Keith and Cliff often played on the Krantz gig. Both of these drummers would often play constant 8th notes with their ride cymbal and hi-hat foot, and then improvise grooves with their snare and bass drum. It' s similar to how jazz drummers play a ride cymbal swing pattern over 2 and 4 on the hi-hat.

There are two major benefits from practicing this technique. First, playing these patterns consistently involves a certain amount of coordination that you might not be used to. So they' ll help with your overall independence. Second, playing straight 8th notes with two limbs allows you to compose extended grooves that can be more than one measure long. Often times Keith and Cliff compose two-, four-, or eight-measure statements with their snare and bass drum over the cymbal 8th notes. Sometimes they repeat these extended lines, and sometimes they' ll move on to something new. It' s very much a jazz mentality, only in a nontraditional jazz setting.

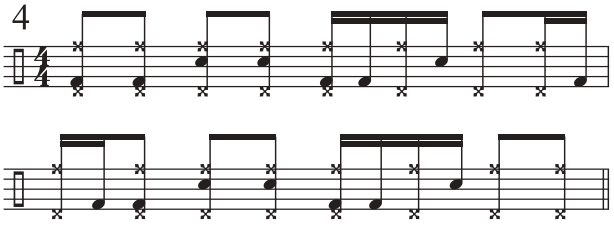
Here' s a simple introductory exercise. Make sure your ride cymbal and hi-hat foot don' t flam.

Here' s a development of the previous idea with more bass drum and snare notes added.

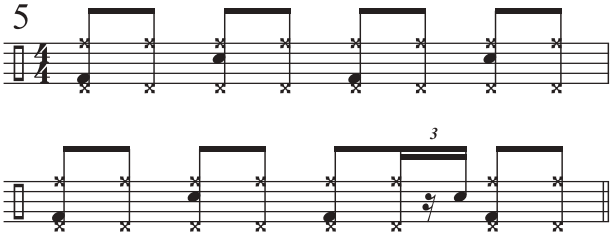
Here' s an example that stretches over two measures. Be careful that your hi-hat foot stays steady when you play 16th notes in the bass drum.



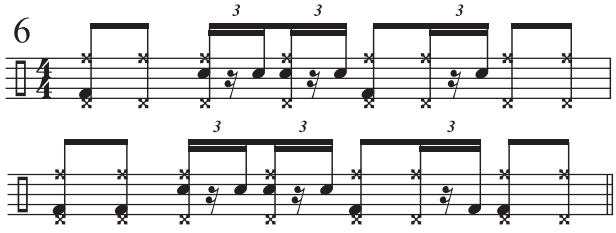
Here' s a development of the previous idea that has some more bass drum and snare notes added.



This next example uses a swung-16ths feel.



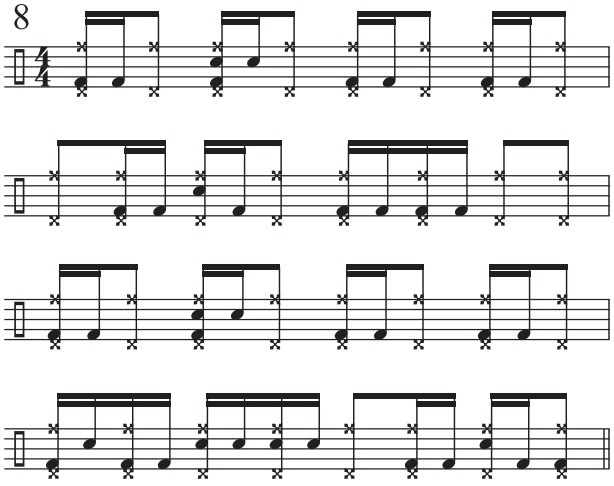
Here' s a development of the swung idea, with more bass drum and snare notes added.



Here are two four-measure examples utilizing dual-limb independence.

7

8



Once you' re comfortable playing the ride cymbal and hi-hat 8th notes simultaneously, try alternating them to give you a different sound. This approach also makes the independence more challenging.

9

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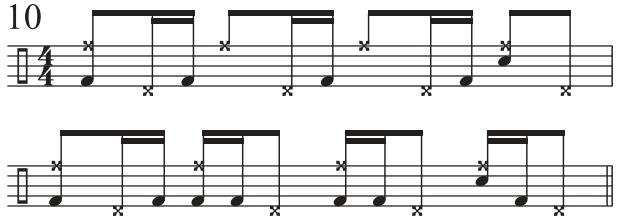

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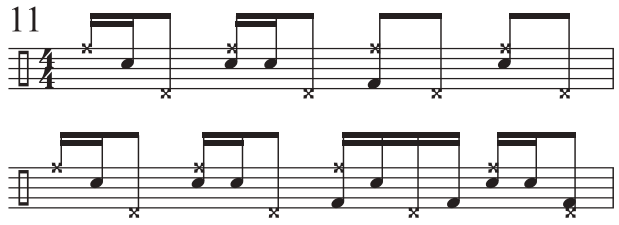
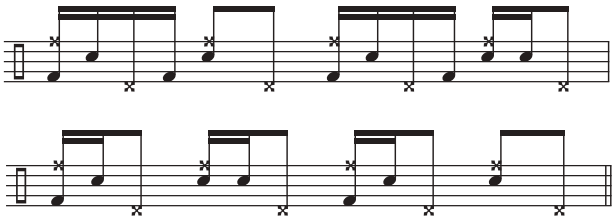
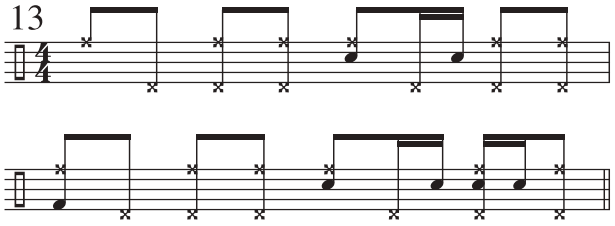




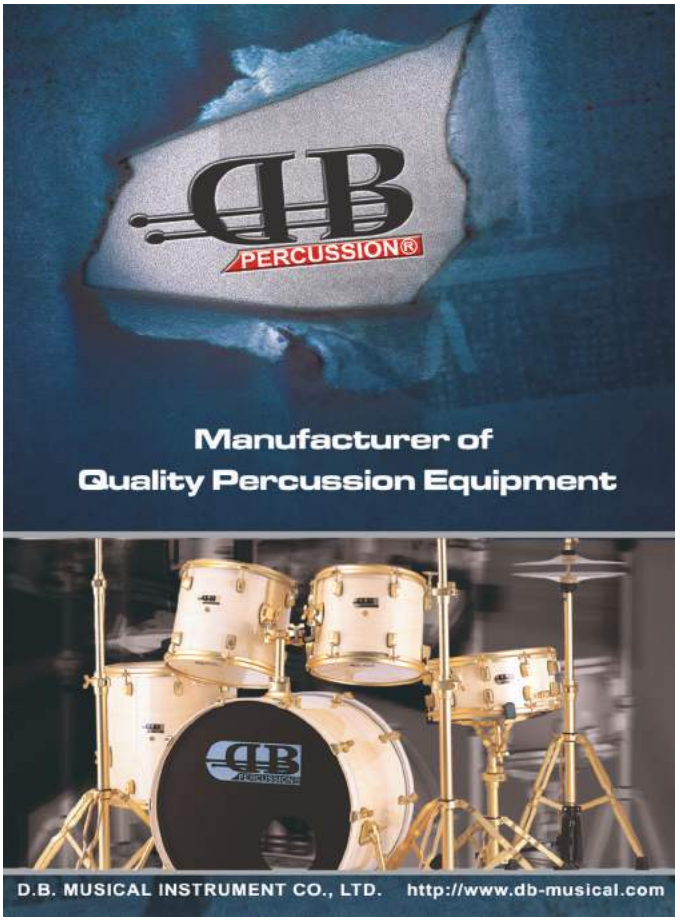
Finally, once you' re comfortable with the alternating ideas, combine those patterns with the constant 8th-note grooves found in the earlier examples. Here are two that combine different exercises. Good luck!

12

13



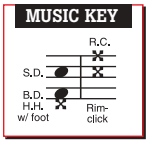
Eric Novod can be reached at jerseydrum@aol.com.



The Unorthodox Clave

Latin Patterns In Seven

by Steve Hass



Playing even the most basic grooves in odd meters can be a challenge. But what if you had to play salsa in seven?

The basic Latin clave is phrased over a two-bar timeline. But it's best to learn to feel the pattern, rather than count it. This will help you to hear the music in a more organic way. When applied to odd meters, the Afro-Cuban clave and cascara (ride) patterns alternate between 2:3 to 3:2 phrasings. This alternating two-bar figure becomes the timeline. Once you internalize this new clave, your odd-time Latin playing will become much more fluent.

Original Afro-Cuban Rhumba Clave And Cascara Pattern

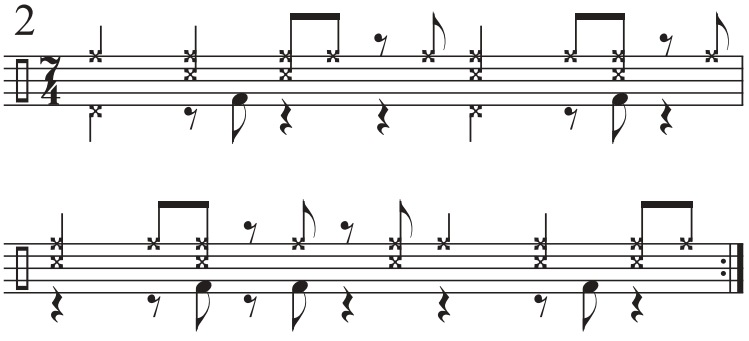
Before we start playing in seven, let's take a look at the basic rumba clave and cascara pattern. It's a good idea to sing these parts before playing them on the drumset. The clave can begin on the "2" side or on the "3" side. Where you start depends on the melody and harmonic rhythm of the music. So practice this example both ways, as written and by beginning with the second measure.

1

The Unorthodox Seven Clave

Here's a similar pattern in 7/4. I played this groove on the Manhattan Vibes version of "All The Things You Are." Both sides of the clave (2:3 and 3:2) are played in the two-bar pattern. It's unconventional, but more and more musicians are exploring these types of concepts as they fuse Middle Eastern and Indian rhythms with Afro-Cuban music.

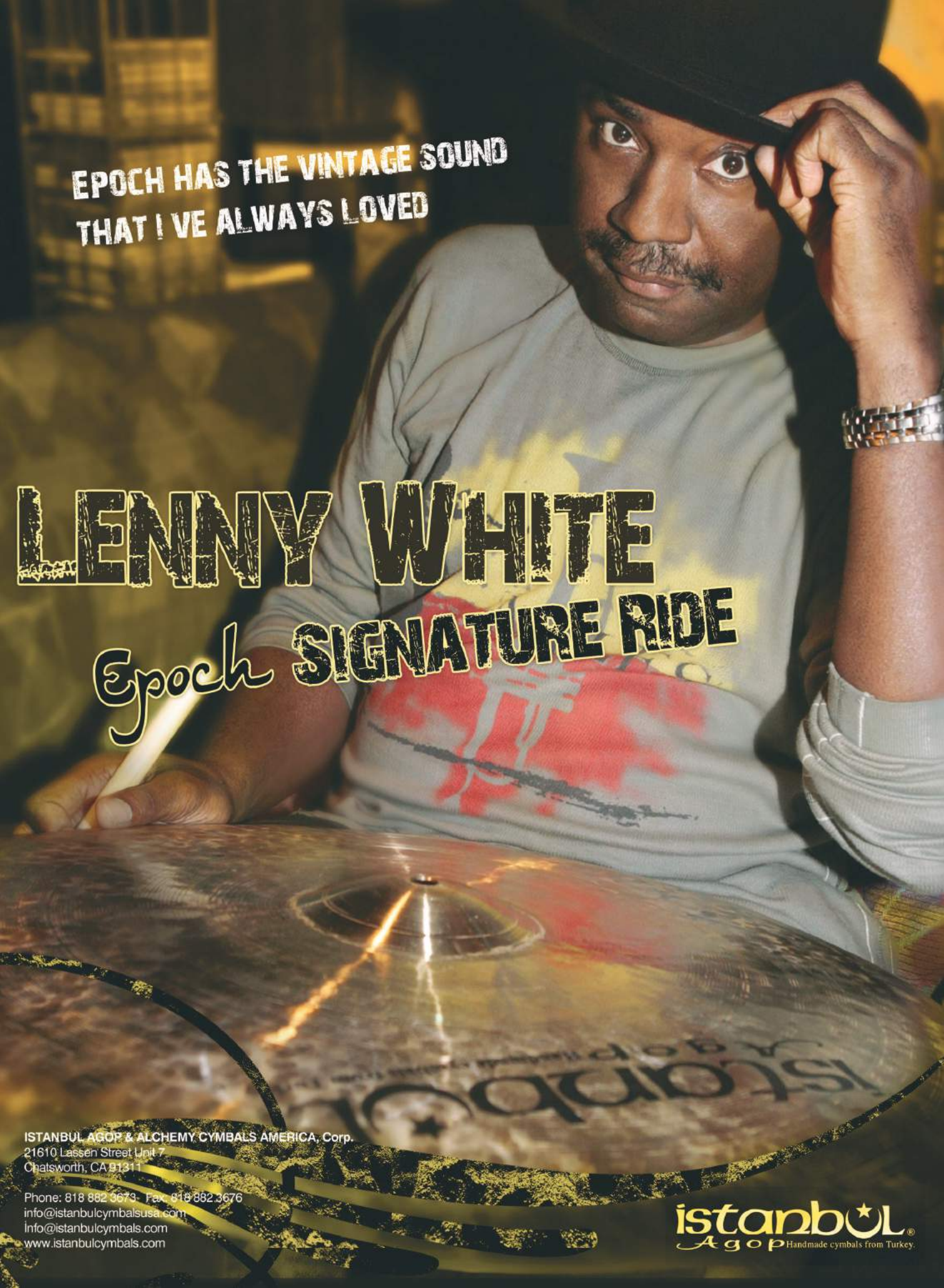
2



You might not want to spring the seven clave on your bandmates at a gig. It takes some getting used to before other musicians will be able to play along with it. So try it at a rehearsal first.

Have fun. And keep me posted on your progress.

Steve Hass is a New York–based drummer who's played with, among others, John Scofield, Manhattan Transfer, and Danilo Perez.



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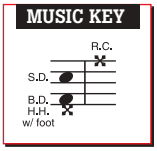
Jazz 101

The Swing Feel And Triplet Independence, Part 2

by Dr. Sherrie Maricle

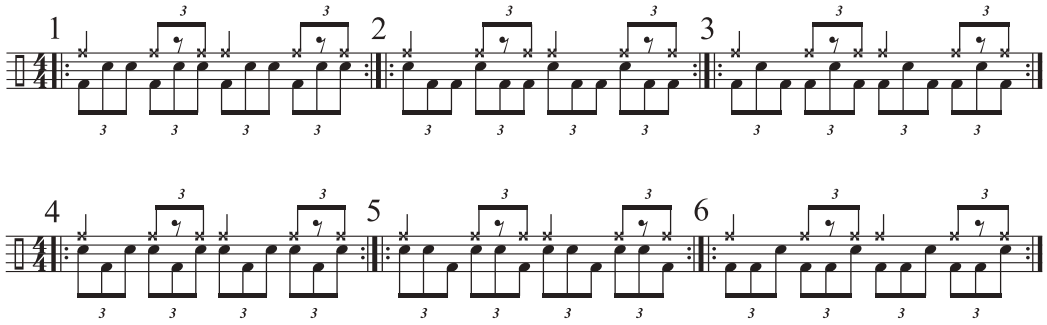


In last month' s article, we began to address basic jazz independence by moving 8th-note triplets among the limbs on each beat. This time, we' re going to break up the triplets between different instruments.

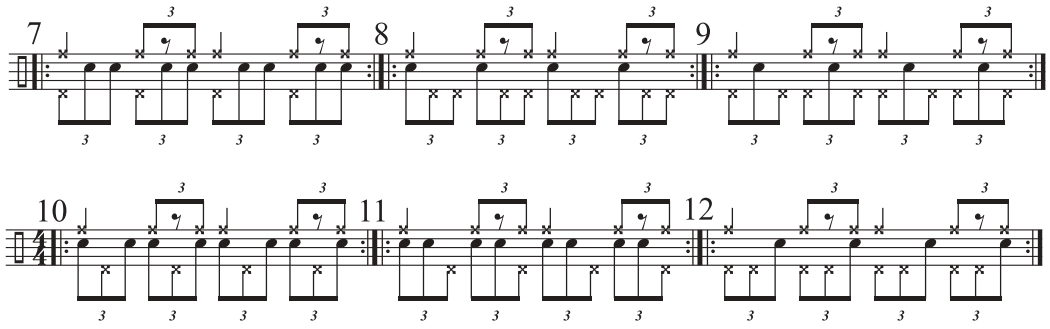
Bebop drumming is often characterized by syncopated rhythms that are created by orchestrating triplets. So mastering the exercises I' ve included here will help elevate your jazz playing to a more sophisticated level.

Breaking Up Triplets

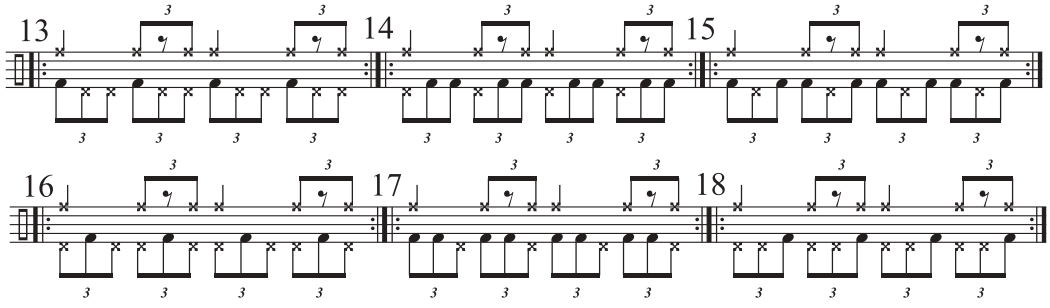
Even when a triplet is " broken," you want to maintain a legato feel. Examples 1–6 split the triplets between the snare and bass drum.



Examples 7–12 orchestrate the triplets between the hi-hat and snare.

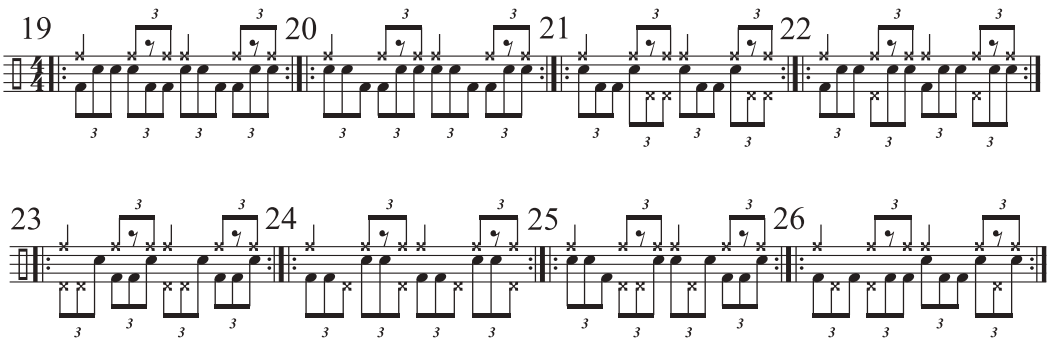


Examples 13–18 utilize the bass drum and hi-hat.



Design Your Own Patterns

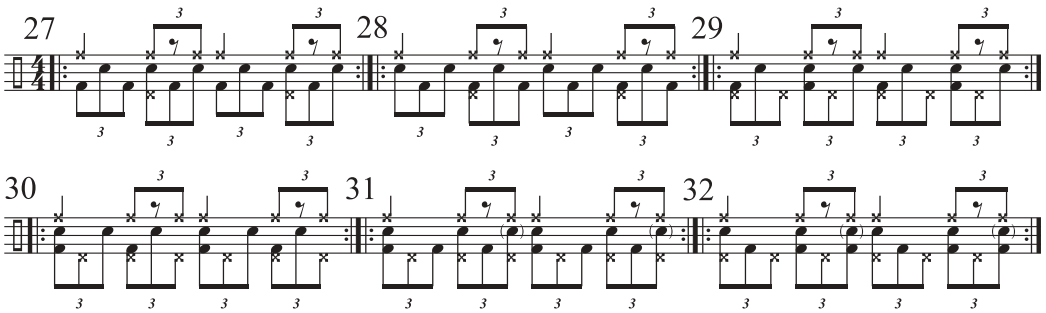
Once the previous examples feel natural, mix and match the patterns to create different combinations. As a starting point, try shifting between the patterns every one, two, three, or four beats. The next eight examples are a sample of the combinations you can create. Use your imagination to discover sounds and patterns that sound and feel good to you.



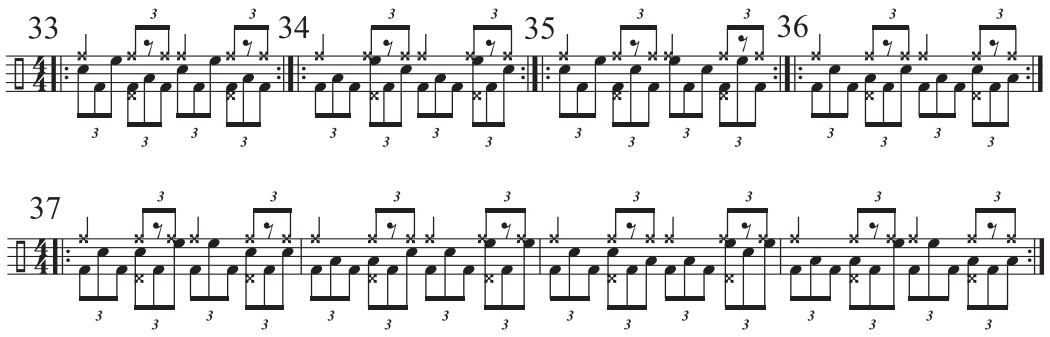
The Quarter-Note Triplet

When you alternate 8th-note triplets between two voices, you can create advanced-sounding quarter note–triplet figures. A master of this type of drumming was Elvin Jones, whose unique style of phrasing took jazz drumming from bebop to the modern era. Elvin opened our ears to new rhythmic concepts and a more free-flowing and unrestricted sense of timekeeping.

Examples 27–32 apply this quarter note–triplet concept to the snare drum and bass drum, followed by the snare and hi-hat, and then the hi-hat and bass drum.



In Examples 33–37, the triplets are orchestrated across the snare and toms. Examples 35–37 have a strong two-over-three feel because the snare and toms are phrased in groups of two.



Once you have all of these exercises under control, try testing your feel, intuition, independence, and time by developing ideas that combine all of the hand and foot variations. I find it helpful to write down difficult patterns before I attempt to play them. This gives you a visual guide that lets you see how the four parts fit together.

New York City drummer **Dr. Sherrie Maricle** is the leader of the acclaimed DIVA big band and the Five Play jazz quintet. For more info, log on to www.divajazz.com.

Studying While You Stomp

Ten Ways To Turn A Rock Show Into A Drum Lesson

by Mark Tomase

I remember July 25, 1989 as if it were yesterday. A swirling guitar intro filtered through the flickering haze of the arena. On stage, a set of Tama Granstars loomed above a wall of amps to either side. The energy was palpable, as was the peculiar feeling that my life was about to be forever changed. The building went pitch black and the crowd roared. A lone spotlight revealed Lars Ulrich perched behind the kit with a maniacal expression on his face, sticks raised triumphantly. Metallica took the stage seconds later, and I was a rock ' n' roll virgin no more.

The excitement of a rock show is hard to top. But the adrenaline rush is only the tip of the iceberg. To the aspiring drummer, a rock show offers a treasure trove of insight into the craft of drumming. With a little patience and an open mind, turning a concert into a drum lesson is simply a matter of knowing what to look for. So get there early, find a good spot with a clear view of the drummer, and let the lesson begin.

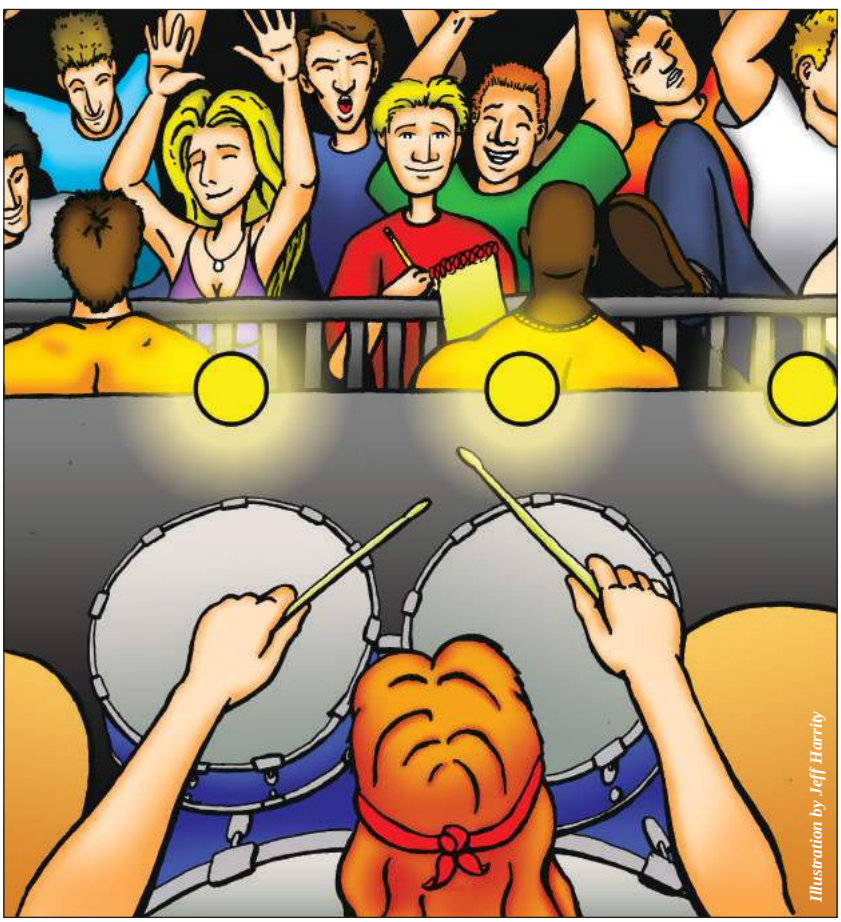


Illustration by Jeff Harris

Kit Setup

Your lesson begins before the band even hits the stage. Take a close look at the kit setup. Large drums? Small drums? Are the toms angled or flat? How high is the throne? How high is the hi-hat in relation to the snare? Take note of how many cymbals there are, their positioning, and the varieties (ride, crash, splash, China, etc.).

Once the band goes on, notice whether the drummer actually plays the entire set. I once observed a drummer painstakingly positioning a set of RotoToms above his hi-hat, only to completely ignore them throughout the performance. Notice also how effectively (or poorly) the setup supports the style of the drummer and the music. Rush' s orchestral approach made Neil Peart' s massive wrap-around kit essential, while Bill Ward' s simple four-piece provided a perfect accompaniment to the stripped-down style of early Black Sabbath.

Now consider how you set up your own kit. Great drummers have a concept of how each piece fits together. Do you?

The Sound

Once the drummer starts playing, close your eyes and try to evaluate the overall sound of the kit. Do you like what you' re hearing? If not, try to figure out exactly what you don' t like about it. Is the kick too boomy? Would the snare sound be better if it " cracked" more? Are the cymbals harsh? Clearly identifying and defining the sound you' re after is the first step toward attaining it.

Attitude

Before we home in on performance details, take a few moments to feel the drummer' s overall vibe. A confident drummer can appear in control not only of his or her own playing, but also of the entire band. There' s an assuredness, bordering on cockiness, that " comes with the territory" of being the drummer, regardless of style.

I once caught a glimpse of Abe Laboriel Jr. playing on TV. The sound was muted. From the determined look on Abe' s face to the way he was slamming the drums, I thought I was watching a metal band. He oozed intensity. I brought up the sound to discover it was a Paul McCartney concert, and they were playing the ballad " Maybe I' m Amazed." I was.

Grip

There are as many styles of grip as there are drummers. (For an extensive look at the subject of grip, check out the January 2006 MD.) For your rock-show lesson, don' t worry too much about the specifics—just observe how the drummer holds the sticks. Is he gripping tightly, or do his hands look relaxed? If he' s using matched grip, can you see the butt of the stick extending out past his pinky, or is it buried in his palm? Do his palms face downward? Inward?

Take note of whether the drummer changes his grip at any point. This could happen for a few reasons. The stick response off a ride cymbal feels considerably different from the bounce off a snare, and many drummers subconsciously alter their grip accordingly. Alternatively, it' s not uncommon for a player to use traditional grip for certain songs and matched for others, or even to switch back and forth within a song. If this is the case, try to determine if there' s any common factor within the music, such as tempo or feel, that appears to dictate the grip the drummer chooses.

Kick Drum

Here' s essential groove element #1: The kick drum is the foundation of rock. Its deep, powerful sound anchors the groove and provides the thunder beneath cymbal crashes. Learn to isolate the drummer' s kick pattern from the rest of the groove. With so much sound coming at you, this can be confusing at first, especially if you can' t see the drummer' s feet. A trick is to watch the front head, which will vibrate with each hit.

Now that you' ve isolated the part, focus in tighter. Is it busy? Sparse? Notice if the drummer is repeating a pattern verbatim each measure, or taking a more random approach. Are all the notes of equal power? If not, try to determine if it' s for dynamic effect, or if the drummer just lacks the chops to hit each note consistently.

Snare Drum

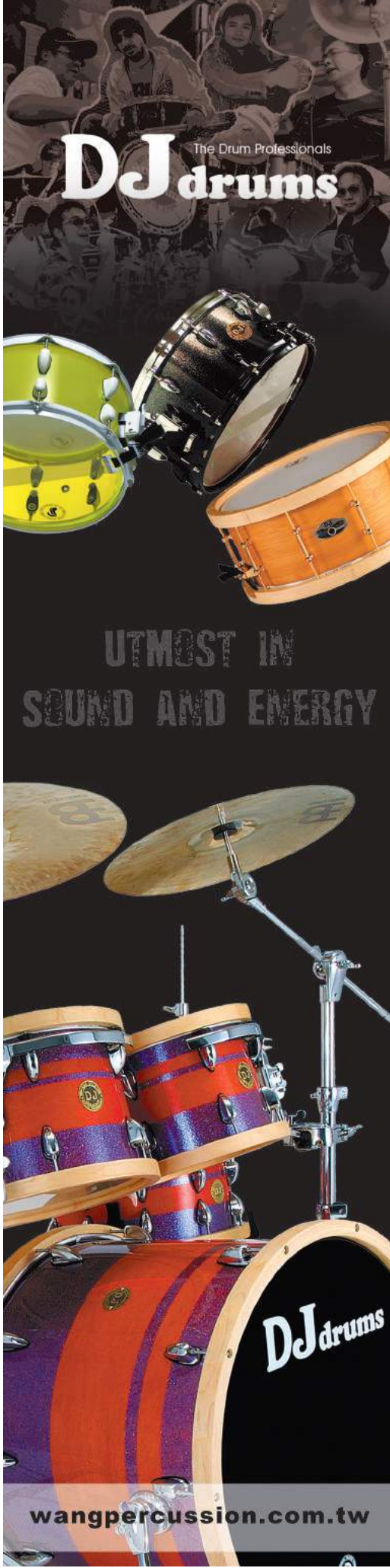
Here' s essential groove element #2: The backbeat. Backbeats are the accented snare notes on beats 2 and 4 in a standard rock beat. Watch how the drummer approaches the backbeats. How hard is the drummer hitting the snare? Are the notes consistent in volume? Does the drummer raise the stick slowly in the space between the beats, or is the entire stroke executed at the last instant? If you watch enough drummers, you' ll find there' s more than one " right" way to strike a drum.

Speaking of the space between the backbeats, watch for quiet snare notes in between 2 and 4. These are called ghost notes, and they add propulsion and a layer of complexity to the groove. The stick usually won' t come off the head more than an inch, so watch closely.

The Ride Pattern

Essential groove element #3: subdivisions of the groove played on the hi-hat or ride cymbal. This is the " ride" pattern: consistent repeated notes played over the pattern created by the kick and snare.

Does the drummer play a repeated pattern of accents, or a more linear stream of notes? Does he or she always hit the same spot? Ride cymbals have a large surface area, and the sound changes depending on where they' re struck. Take note of whether the drummer exploits this fact. Likewise, listen for the different tonalities he or she pulls out of the hi-hat. There' s more to playing the hats than meets the eye, which brings us to...



The Hi-Hat Foot

The action of the hi-hat foot will usually be the least obvious element of the drummer's playing. It's not simply an open-or-closed proposition; the drummer's foot can be used to hold the hats at any point in between. They can be held tightly closed ("chick, chick, chick") or partially open ("pssshhhh, pssshhhh, pssshhhh"). Or they can be opened momentarily for an accent, called a "bark." The "pssst" from Aerosmith's "Walk This Way" is a familiar example.

Pay attention to whether the drummer plays hi-hat patterns with his or her foot while keeping time on the ride. Accenting the groove in this way can be a major contribution to the overall drive of the song.

The Essential Groove Elements Again

Now that you've considered them separately, go back and observe the interaction between the kick, snare, and hi-hat/ride as a unit. Rock drummers devote much of their energy to playing patterns between these three voices, so spend some quality time here. Note when limbs land in unison. Great drummers have the ability to push one limb slightly ahead of the beat while laying another back, or to play certain elements of the groove precisely, while others are looser—as if each was being played by a different person.

Also, focus on any two voices at a time (kick/snare, kick/hi-hat, snare/hi-hat), and try to pick out any "conversations" that are taking place within the groove. The call-and-response of the kick and the snare would be an example, such as the drum intro on the Guns N' Roses hit "Paradise City." A less obvious one might be between Brad Wilk's hi-hat and ghosted snare notes on Audioslave's "Like A Stone."

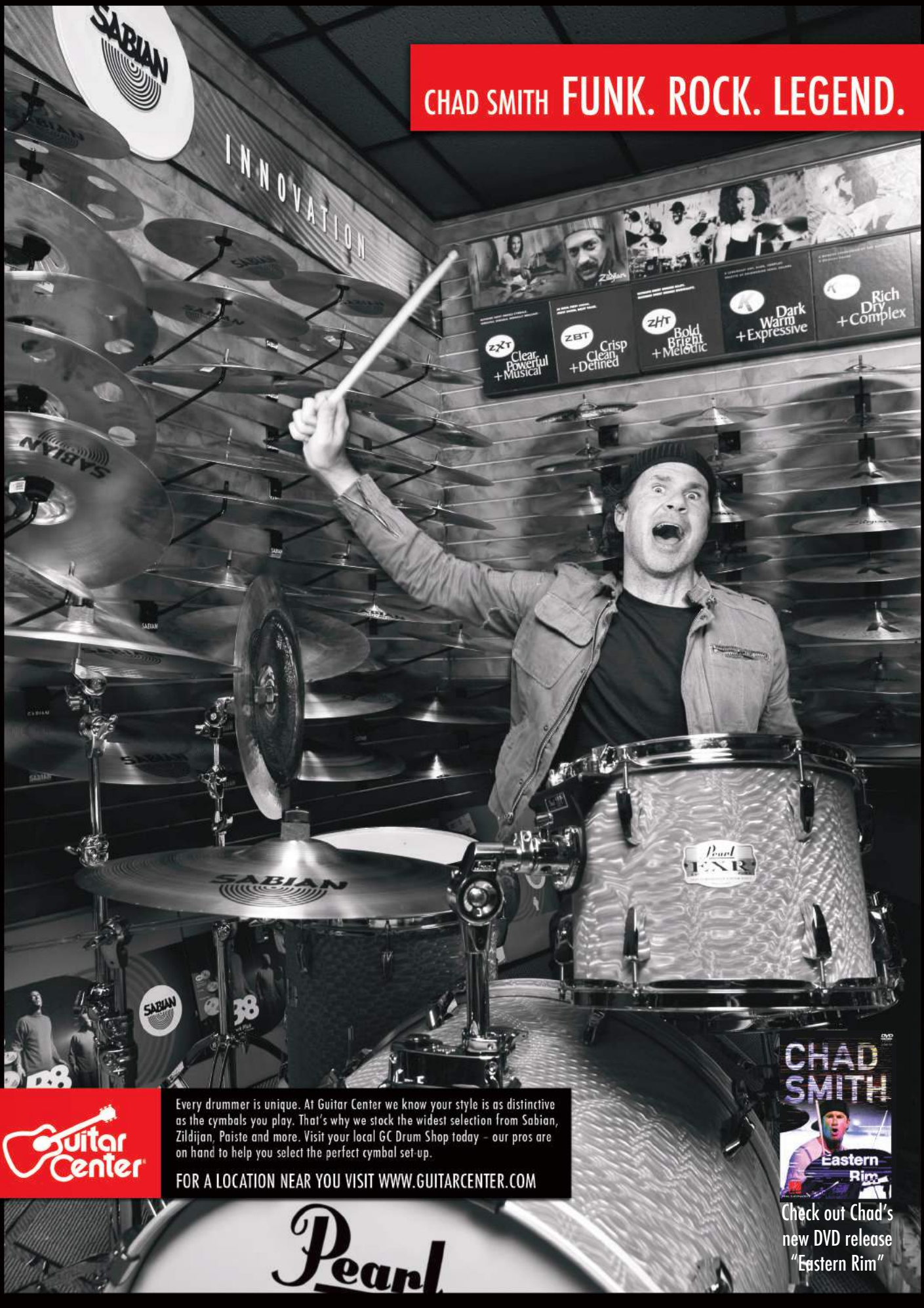
Facial Expression

The degree to which a drummer "owns" his craft is often written all over his face. Does the expression on the face of the drummer you're observing tell you anything about his or her drumming? Is that expression aggressive and angry, or smiling and happy? It the expression constant, or does the drummer seem to wince when going for a fill?

Charlie Watts of The Rolling Stones can play "Sympathy For The Devil" with the same expression he wears while reading the newspaper. Do you know what you look like when you're playing?

If you leave a concert with solid impressions based on the ten subjects presented here, you'll have received a valuable lesson on the topic of drumming successfully in the real world. Make the most of it!

Mark Tomase is a New York City–based musician, producer, and writer. He can be reached at Mark.Tomase@gmail.com.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Dealing With Adversity

A Personal Account

by Ricky Sebastian

Some of you reading this may have heard of me, or know of my work. But I' m sure that many of you don' t know who I am. I' m a professional drummer/musician from New Orleans, Louisiana.

In 1983, at the age of twenty-five, I moved to New York City, because most of my musical idols lived there and I wanted to play with them someday. Between 1985 and 2000 I came to be regarded by some people as one of the top drummers in town. I toured or recorded with the likes of Dr. John, Jaco Pastorius, John Scofield, Dianne Reeves, Tania Maria, and Herbie Mann. I also taught at NYC' s famed Drummers Collective.

In 1998 my wife and I decided to move our family back to New Orleans, where we bought a house. I began a six-year teaching stint in the jazz department of the University Of New Orleans. All went well until 2004—a year full of events that would prove devastating.

When Things Go Wrong

In January of 2004, my father passed away. About five months later, my wife and I divorced. I decided to move back to New York to re-establish my music performance/teaching career. I set up shop in an apartment in Brooklyn and started networking. A few months later, as calls for some good gigs started coming again, life threw me another curve.

I was performing in Pittsburgh with the great soul singer Sam Moore, of Sam & Dave fame. We were playing on a portable stage set up on the theater' s regular stage, and that portable stage was too small for our ten-piece band. After packing my cymbals into their flight case following the show, I leaned over to put them on the floor. I slipped on an aluminum rim on the edge of the stage (which had no safety railing) and fell to the main stage floor below. On the way down, my left elbow hit the edge of the portable stage, dislocating my left shoulder and damaging a nerve in my arm. I was rushed to the emergency room, then underwent an operation to relocate my shoulder.

I thought, Well, so much for my career and my passion for playing the drums. It' s all over now.

The next afternoon, I awoke in the hospital with a sling on my left arm and the realization that my left hand was completely paralyzed. Needless to say, I pretty much freaked out. I thought, Well, so much for my career and my passion for playing the drums. It' s all over now. The doctor told me that there was no way to tell if the feeling would return to my hand, or, if it did, how much. With the aid of friends I flew back to New York City that afternoon and made it home to my apartment.

A Slow Comeback

Over the following few months I performed a couple of times at important engagements that I' d booked prior to my acci-

dent. One was a clinic at the Percussive Arts Society's International Convention in Nashville. I don't know quite how I did it, but I flew to Nashville and gave the clinic, receiving accolades from several of my peers. When it was over, I returned to my hotel room in serious pain, took my medication, and got ready for the flight back to New York. After that experience, I knew it wasn't a good idea to try to play any more until my shoulder had fully healed.

I spent the winter of 2004 doing some serious soul-searching. Since I couldn't work I exhausted my savings and started living off of credit cards. The only thing I liked besides drumming and music was computers, so I decided to go back to school online to get a degree in Web design, with a minor in network administration. I pursued this for fifteen months straight, and it's the hardest thing I've done in my life.

About five months after the accident, my shoulder and hand had healed enough for me to drive back to Louisiana, though my left hand had sustained permanent damage. I sold everything that I could, including my drums, studio equipment, and several cymbals. What I couldn't sell, I gave to friends, retaining only what I could fit in my van. So I basically lost all material possessions at that time. I moved in with my mother in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Four months later, Hurricane Katrina hit.

There was no music scene to speak of in Baton Rouge, and teaching positions were impossible to get due to the lack of jazz departments in schools and the number of teachers who'd been giving private lessons in the area for years. I drifted from one IT job to another for more than two years.

I finally got a break three months ago when an old friend offered to rent me space in a house he had in New Orleans. With the help of a grant from the Emergency Musicians Relief Fund from Local 802 in New York, as well as from MusiCares, I was able to move back to my beloved city.

Life is not easy in New Orleans, but I wouldn't be any other place right now. I'm doing everything I can to help the recovery effort. And my beautiful daughter is close by, so I get to spend time with her. I'm playing two or three gigs a week, and I have a new house under construction in the Musician's Village. So I have hope again.

It's Not Always Somebody Else

Throughout my career, I often wondered what became of some famous and influential drummers I'd admired when I was young, but who stopped playing. It's like they just fell off the face of the planet. I don't want that to be my case, as well. I want my friends, fans, and peers to know what happened to me, and to know that I haven't given up.

Modern Drummer editor in chief Bill Miller went through some serious adversity a few years back when he was mauled by a dog and couldn't play for a long time. He wrote an article about that experience in MD, and I often reflected on that article during my long recovery. My father always told me that when life throws something at you and you fall down, you have to get up and keep going. It was a great lesson that I never forgot. I just hope that my story will mean something to any drummers out there who find themselves in extremely adverse situations.

Today you can rest assured that Ricky Sebastian is back playing better than ever, and you'll be hearing more from me. I have an instructional book out, published by Hal Leonard, called Independence On The Drum Set, and I hope to start writing articles and exercises for Modern Drummer again. The message here is, no matter what may happen to you, don't give up. Things will change, and you have the power, no matter how bleak the situation, to make those changes happen.

Ricky Sebastian welcomes email correspondence at rickys@rickysebastian.com. For more information on Ricky's career, go to www.rickysebastian.com.

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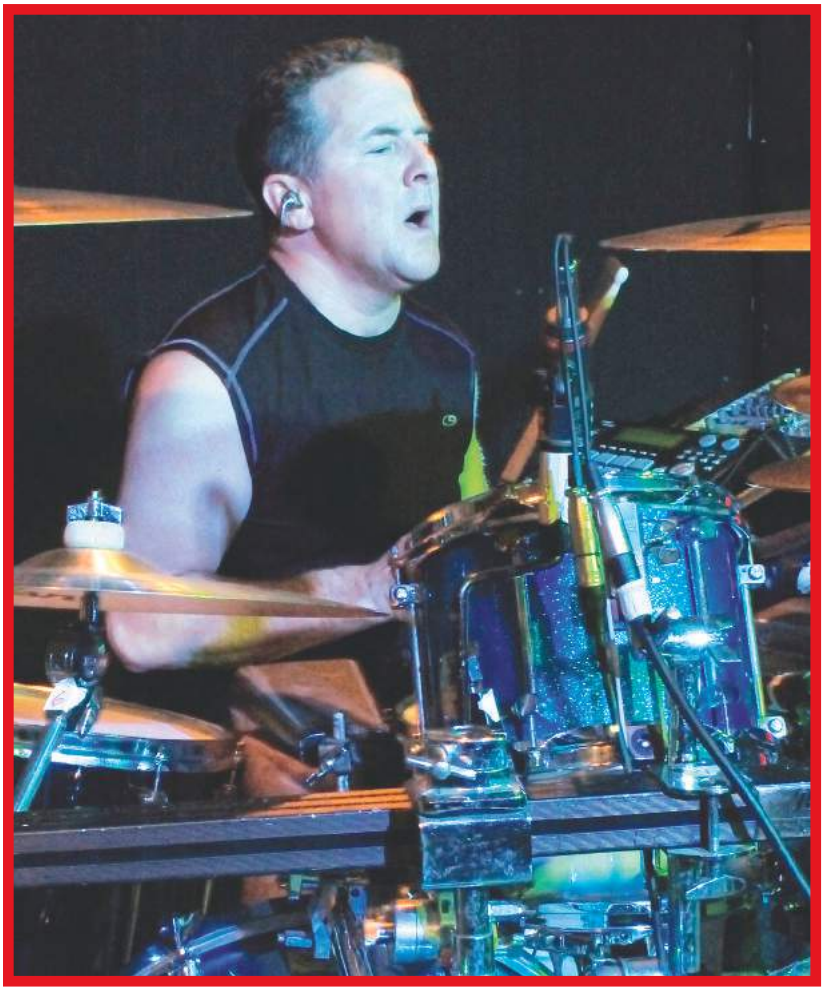
Starting Your Own Band

Why, When, And How

Story by Mark Zonder • Photos by Alex Solca

There comes a time in the career of almost every drummer when he or she gets tired of being at the back of the stage, literally and figuratively. We drummers are musicians, and many of us have creative energies that simply cannot be employed when we' re serving a strictly supporting role. At that point, it may be time to consider starting our own band.



Ah, but when you begin to consider starting your own band, several questions instantly arise. What do I need to do to get things going...how do I find my players... how do I handle the musicians I want to work with? The whole process can be mind-boggling and frightful. But with preparation and patience, the experience of starting and guiding your own band can be one of your greatest musical and personal experiences.

Why Start Your Own Band?

I' ve spent a few decades in various bands. Some were successful, others were just enjoyable. In Fates Warning and several other bands, I could really stretch out and be creative. Through it all, though, I found myself tied to another composer' s music. I was compromising and changing my parts to fit that person' s songs. That' s not a complaint; it' s just a statement of fact. A drummer' s main concerns are groove, tempo, and finding the right presence in the music.

Witnessing—and taking part in—the birth of a new sound is truly one of the high points of forming one' s own band.

But I was hearing different ideas, patterns, and styles running through my head: driving rock beats, reggae and Latin grooves, and other ideas rooted in electronics, percussion sounds, and serious production techniques. I thought these drum ideas, coupled with accessible music, could be exciting to play and appealing to hear. But they' d be very difficult to apply to parts that had been already written. I wanted to control my musical destiny, and to do that it seemed to me that I needed to start my own band.

Know Where You' re Going

Once you determine to start your own band, begin by figuring out its musical identity. To aid that process, record some of the drum ideas you want to use as the basis for songs. There are plenty of inexpensive recording setups today, and if you have a computer you' re halfway home. For the purposes of starting your own band, the quality of these recordings isn' t too important. You' ll use them simply to focus and ground your ideas, express those ideas to other musicians you might partner with, and, if your songs get to this point, communicate what you' re trying to achieve to a studio engineer. Once those people hear and respond to your work, you' ll be able to tell fairly quickly whether there' s magic between you. If there is, that' s when the real genesis of a band will begin.

Mark and Slavior bandmates Wayne Findlay (left) and Greg Analla.

Finding The Right People

Don' t be in a hurry. Finding the right collaborators for a drumming-centered project can take some time. Getting along on a personal as well as an artistic level is important, because the road you' ll share will have its ups and downs. And since no income is going to be generated at the outset, it' s best to find a writing partner (such as a guitarist or a keyboardist) who' s willing to get involved for the pleasure of the music.

You' re not likely to make the perfect connection right off the bat. For example, I put out feelers and received responses from guys whose first question was " How much does it pay, and do I get per diem?" A guitarist sent back a disc with him playing lead from start to finish over my parts. They didn' t care a bit about the music or what I was trying to do.

When I finally connected with Wayne Findlay, everything seemed to click. He came with no attitude except " music first," and he believed in the band system. At this point, I was no longer a " solo artist." Wayne and I were partners in search of a common goal. Next, we needed a vocalist to bring into our growing company. Gregg Analla stood out from all the other singers whose disks we received. His interpretation, lyrics, melodies, and vocal quality completely blew me away. All of a sudden, we had a defined sound and direction—something I couldn' t have crafted on my own going into this.

This marked the birth of Slavior, which released its self-titled debut disk in April of 2007. Witnessing—and taking part in—the birth of a new sound is truly one of the high points of forming one' s own band.

It' s Not Just About Beats

The drum parts you' ve created as the foundation for your music might be the hippest thing going, but if you don' t have good songs, you really don' t have a band. You' re just a bunch of guys jamming. You might have a great groove to build a song around, but can you really play it for five minutes straight?

Keep your mind open to the ideas of people you' ve brought into your project, and don' t be afraid to incorporate their ideas into yours. The best situation is when your partners come up with musical ideas that will lead the song other places and help develop your initial foundation into a unique sound for your band.

Be Businesslike

At some point you need to decide how the band will divide future income from sources like recording advances, merchandise, and publishing. I' ve always thought it fairest to make everyone equal partners, who will share equally in the profits and the risks. This creates goodwill and keeps everyone focused on doing everything they are capable of to advance the band.

Other bands have been based on a single leader (who makes most of the artistic contribution and/or takes most of the financial risks) supported by " sidemen." As long as the delineation is made clear at the outset and everyone knows what' s expected from him or her—and what they will receive in exchange—this system can also be successful.

Starting your own band can be frustrating—and it' s never free of expense, heartache, and obstacles. But overcoming all that and achieving this goal will leave you with a unique and amazing sense of accomplishment and pride.

Mark Zonder now leads Slavior after spending fourteen years with Fates Warning. He also does a variety of recording projects with other groups, as well as operating his own recording studio called Bill's Place. More information is available at www.markzonder.com.

Building A Successful Teaching Practice

Part 4: Having A Plan

by Robert P. Smith

Picture the following: A student walks into the teacher' s studio and, after exchanging greetings, sits down and prepares for the lesson. The teacher then turns to the student and says, " So, what do you want to learn today?"

If you' re wondering what the problem is with that scenario, let me put it into a slightly different context for you. Imagine sitting in a history class in school, and having the teacher walk in and say, " So, what do you want to learn today?" My guess is that complete confusion would ensue. Of course you' d never see this happen in a classroom, because the teacher would come prepared with a lesson plan based on an established curriculum.

You might be thinking, " Well, that' s alright for a classroom of thirty people, but my teaching is private and one-on-one. We can keep things loose and spontaneous. It' s more fun that way." Maybe so—in the short term. But it' s my feeling that this is a shortsighted, dangerous strategy that will result in fewer and less well-educated students, as well as in a damaged reputation for you. And all that you need in order to avoid these problems is a plan.

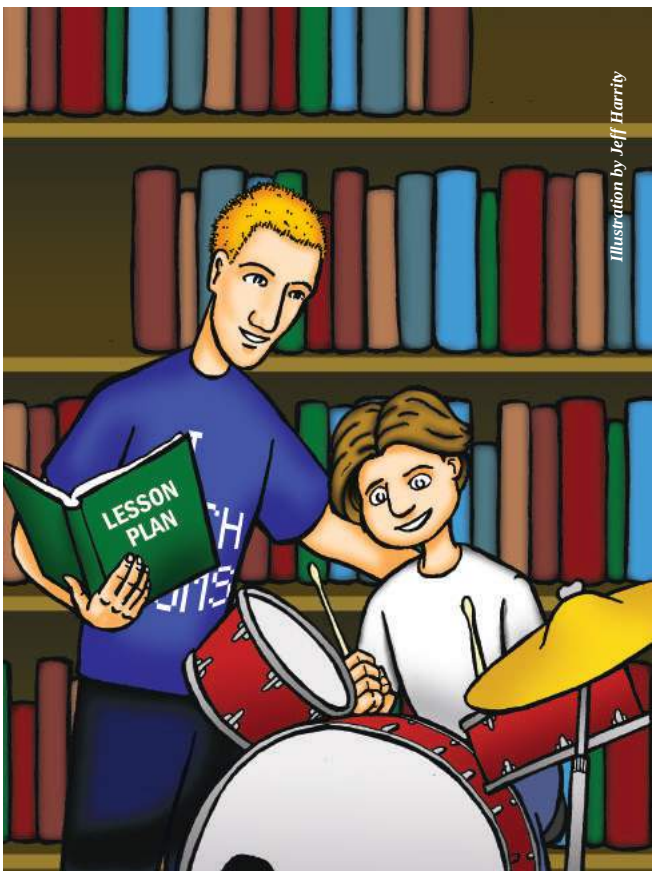


Illustration by Jeff Harrity

The Curriculum

I mentioned the word " curriculum" earlier, and I want to define that word so we' re working from the same starting point. A curriculum is a particular course of study in a school, college, or other learning environment. The phrase " a course

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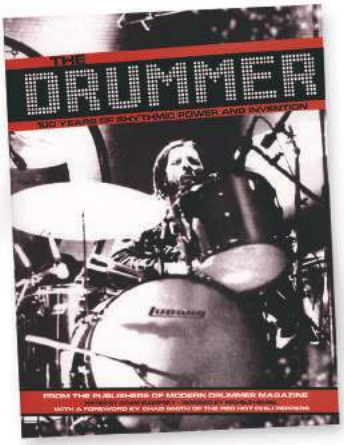

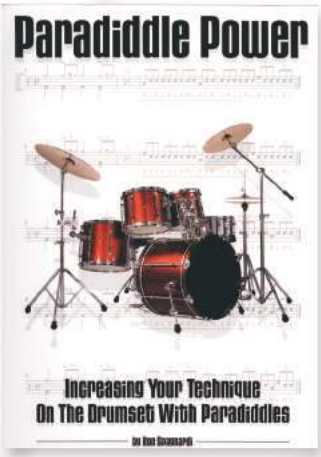

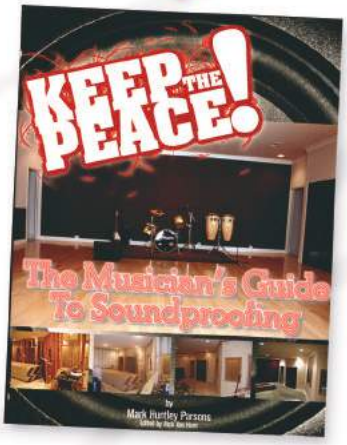

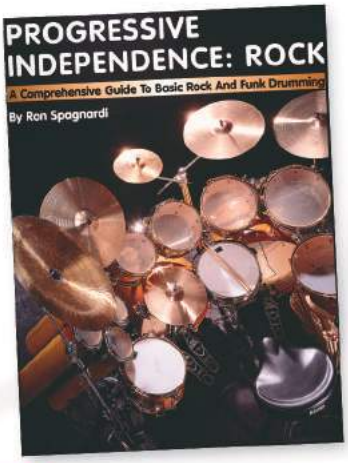

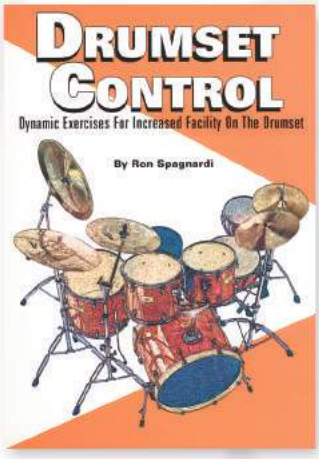

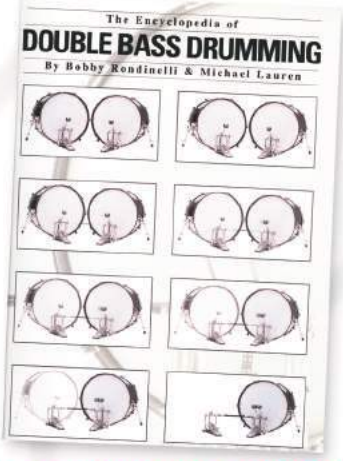

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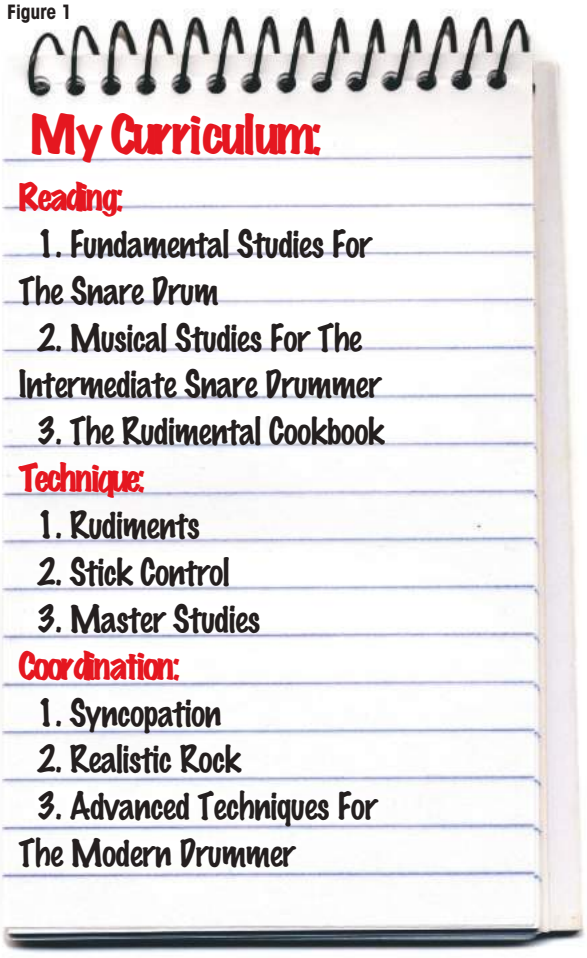
Figure 1



of study" gives the feeling of purpose—of moving from point A to point B in a well thought–out and logical manner. I' m not saying that you need to come up with a course syllabus that outlines every move for the next year. But I am suggesting that you have a definite vision of where a particular student should be headed, and how to achieve his or her goals. Your students look to you to get them where they want to go, and you need to have their best interests at heart. By allowing them to dictate to you what to teach, you' re allowing someone with little or no experience to call the shots.

A course of study should not be difficult to put together. You probably have an idea of what to do already, from how you were taught by your teacher. If you were taught properly, you were taken through a series of exercises and routines that helped you to develop your reading skills, technique, and coordination in a methodical fashion, with each exercise building upon the previous one until a specific goal was reached. This method usually involves books, CDs, and other materials used in conjunction with one another to build an entire program from which a student can develop and learn. The materials that you learned from can easily be incorporated into your teaching plan, then honed and possibly updated to suit your needs.

Keep Things Up To Date

Don' t get the idea that all you have to do is copy what your teacher did in order to be a great teacher yourself. I simply suggested that using that background could be a starting point in developing your own curriculum. You' re going to have to do some research to see what' s out there for you to use. I did this by picking up different books, playing through them myself, questioning everything, and making decisions on what worked and what didn' t until I compiled a list I thought was effective to work from. The extensive resources available to draw from today should easily allow you to create a well–balanced, goal–oriented program that can address any problem. For me, creating such a program has resulted in a high success rate among my students—which, in turn, created great word–of–mouth advertising for my teaching services.

Focus On Specific Areas

Earlier I mentioned three areas of practice that need to be addressed: reading, technique, and coordination. In my curriculum I developed specific teaching plans for each item. With beginners, I introduce them gradually. Reading always comes first, followed by some technique. After those begin to get established, I introduce coordination (on the drumset).

As the student progresses through these three areas, concepts from each one begin to merge. Eventually I have the student doing solos by Max Roach or John Bonham, which incorporate all three areas to a high degree. I' ve simplified and condensed this concept, of course. It could take years to accomplish, depending on the student.

Tailor The Plan To The Student

" But every student is different," you say. " How could I possibly pigeonhole all my students into a ' one–size–fits–all' program?"

Figure 2

Well, if you develop your curriculum well, allowing yourself some flexibility, you' ll be able to use only what is necessary for each individual student, extracting the specific topics you need without losing your overall " big picture" goal. For example, you might have written your curriculum down in a linear fashion, as shown in Figure 1. This is fine for understanding what materials you need, but it gives a certain sense of dogmatic study. In other words, it seems to define the order you need to work in all the time.

Instead, try to think of your curriculum as shown in Figure 2. Separate your topics into groups that can be drawn upon in any order, depending upon the needs of the student. For example, you might never use some books for a particular student, but they' re there if a problem arises.

You can also consider the empty space around the listed items as your area in which to be creative. Develop your own exercises that address certain issues, or use established books differently from the way their authors intended. I go a step farther, having my more experienced students come up with exercises themselves to address weaknesses they find in their playing, using Syncopation or Stick Control. I still use many of these exercises.

Keep Things Organized

Having a curriculum means having a framework on which you can always rely and that helps you maintain a focus of study within the classroom. I mentioned earlier that working without a plan can have serious consequences. Imagine if a math class focused on addition one day, on fractions the next, and on division the next. It' s all math, but how does one idea reinforce another? It' s the same with music. If you teach in a disjunctive way, you' ll never see the progress you want out of a student, because ideas and concepts are never reinforced. A scatter-shot approach might be fun in the beginning, but it will ultimately lead to frustration and eventual dropouts among your students, and a not-so-good word of mouth reputation for you.

Learning an instrument can be hard work. But developing an organized teaching plan—and explaining that plan to your students—will help them to see that there' s a big reward for them at the end of the process.

Rob Smith is a graduate of Temple University in Jazz Performance. He maintains a successful private teaching practice in the Philadelphia area. He also performs in various jazz groups and big bands, records commercial jingles, and works with such artists as St. Alborne, Mike Montrey, and The Helots. You can contact Rob at jabondo@msn.com.

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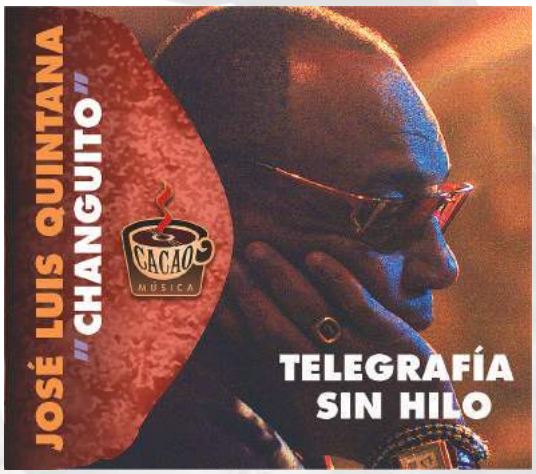


CHANGUITO TELEGRAFÍA SIN HILO

★★★★½

Influential percussionist "Changuito" (José Luis Quintana) gets his long overdue sophomore solo outing. On his first, the Cuban master unexpectedly delved into electronic club canvases with grooving but chilly results. This session sticks closer to his roots: the Latin dance floor. There's plenty of hip Latin jazz interspersed throughout, but the joyous ballroom heart is key. Changuito's timbale and percussion grooves thrill and surprise while the superb, slick arrangements are melodic and sassy. Supporting percussion heavies such as the rising **PATRICIO "EL CHINO" DIAZ** and conga great **GIOVANNI HIDALGO** up the ante. Hotwires both the head and feet. (Cacao Musica) **Jeff Potter**

TAKING THE REINS

TOM TEASLEY PAINTING TIME

Teasley delivers some seriously grooving, organically derived beats here. There's no keyboard or guitar or programming; it's just drums, percussion, and horns, and it's both fierce and lovely. "Good Foot Dervish" is an especially fun African/Dixieland fusion with trombone, sax, and drums. "Know Diddley" is as if Bo Diddley was leading Tony Allen and Afrobeat 2000. Unhurriedly mining rhythm, texture, and improv, Teasley and friends leave us a lesson in world beat. (www.tomteasley.com) **Robin Tolleson**

KEN SERIO DRUMSPEAK

Percussionist Ken Serio's *Drumspeak* features four intriguing extended instrumentals. Taking a cue from composer Steve Reich's work, the music builds and transforms over time as instruments and rhythms are purposefully introduced. An excellent sense of color and mood permeate Serio's performance, making this a refreshing listen. (www.trippingtree.com) **Martin Patmos**

STOCKTON HELBING FOR NOTHING IS SECRET

Stockton Helbing, drummer with the late Maynard Ferguson, guides a septet through dynamic, contemporary jazz tunes on his second outing. The ensemble's instrumental color is noteworthy, and though Helbing's playing on the mellower tunes could benefit from more authority, uptempo he lays a solid foundation, spiced with tasty fills. (www.stocktonhelbing.com) **Martin Patmos**

MACEO PARKER ROOTS & GROOVES

★★★★½

Legendary James Brown sideman Maceo Parker returns with a beautifully recorded two-CD live set assisted by Germany's renowned WDR Big Band. Disc 1 (*A Tribute To Ray Charles*) showcases Maceo's smooth vocals and drummer **HANS DEKKER** swinging tightly. Disc 2 (*Back To Funk*) lets Maceo's horn do the talking, and allows the inimitable **DENNIS CHAMBERS** to keep the groove straight as an arrow, never playing anything superfluous just because he can. Chambers' no-frills, head-bobbing nasty funk and time-keeping is a wonder here. (Remember his instructional video *In The Pocket*?) But watch your jaw during the lightning-quick foot doubles in "Shake Everything…." (Heads Up International) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

THE BLED SILENT TREATMENT

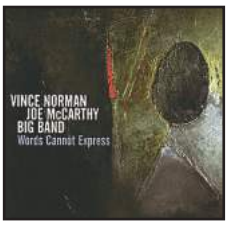
★★★½☆

Hitting along the experimentalism of Refused, with the more metallic elements of contemporaries Coheed And Cambria, Arizona-based The Bled return with the decidedly damaging *Silent Treatment*. Drummer **MIKE PEDICONE** knows his hardcore history, commanding the kit with fury and finesse, swapping tempos and patterns throughout songs like "Breathing Room Barricades" and the deftly double-kicked album opener, "Shadetree Mechanics." With spot-on fills that machete their way out of the blaring guitar foliage, Pedicone's performance is downright punishing. And the impenetrable production, in distinct opposition to the album title, only furthers this effort. (Vagrant) **Waleed Rashidi**

ROB KENDT I'M NOT SENTIMENTAL

★★★☆☆

Drummer **MATT NORTH** plays on and produces Rob Kendt's *I'm Not Sentimental*, and you can tell from his drumming that he sees the big picture. This is an example of smart rock and studio playing. North's swinging tom shuffle on "I'm Not Sentimental" is propulsive and safely tucked out of the vocalist's way. His four-bar switch to barking hats provides musical counterpoint and a bit of comic relief. And he can have some fun backing Kendt, who sounds something like Ben Folds corrupted by Steely Dan, with a Nashville twist. Kendt's medley of Britney Spears and Beatles classics, "Oops, I Did Bungalow Bill," gets major props from this reviewer. North plays it for all its camp value, including inside drummer jokes like his fake dynamic buildup into...the exact same beat and tempo. (www.robkendt.com) **Robin Tolleson**



VINCE NORMAN/JOE MCCARTHY BIG BAND WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS

★★★☆☆

AFRO BOP ALLIANCE CAMINO NUEVO

★★★½☆

A pool of impressive talent from the Washington, DC area is tapped on two vibrant releases. One features a hard-swinging big band, the other a joyful, grooving Latin jazz sextet. Both are masterfully helmed by drummer **JOE McCARTHY**. As leader of Afro Bop Alliance, McCarthy shares kit and percussion roles on *Camino Nuevo* (Jazz Maniacs Records), mixing modern and traditional grooves with fluid ease. Co-leading his big band on *Words Cannot Express* (OA2), McCarthy's voracious drive fuels the thrilling, surprising arrangements of multi-instrumentalist **Vince Norman.** An in-demand freelancer, McCarthy's also the drummer for the United States Naval Academy's jazz ensemble. If his sworn duty is to swing, then he's serving his country well. **Jeff Potter**

EUGENE MASLOV WHERE THE LIGHT COMES FROM...

★★★½☆

Russian-born pianist Eugene Maslov knows exactly who best will navigate his expertly arranged post-bop jazz. About one minute into the album, during a super-charged 6/8 pseudo-shuffle take of Miles Davis's "Nardis," the venerable **VINNIE COLAIUTA** is soloing with absolute abandon: the flams, the ghost notes, the ridiculously funky ride cymbal groove that he *fades out.* Later, the precise, off-kilter hits on the head of "Last Ray" will leave even the most accomplished drummer scratching his head. Thirty years and countless recording sessions after his arrival on the scene, it's still all there: so fresh, jarringly unexpected, and outrageously well-executed. (www.bluecanoerecords.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

MAKING PROGRESS by Mike Haid

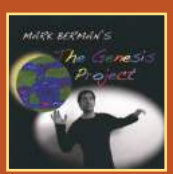
JOHN MACALUSO & UNION RADIO, SYMPHONY X, DERDIAN

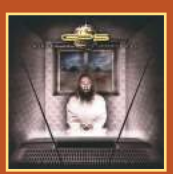
The powerful, aggressive, and rhythmically complex prog metal on **JOHN MACALUSO** & Union Radio's *The Radio Waves Goodbye* features great drum sounds and precision drumming from Macaluso in the style of Mike Portnoy. Strong double bass chops, hand technique, and groove, combined with Macaluso's creative writing skills, deliver a well-structured balance between vocal and instrumental passages. (www.lionmusic.com)

Paradise Lost, Symphony X's long-awaited prog metal epic, does not disappoint. The masterful musicianship, gutsy vocals, and outstanding compositions and production make this a contender for best prog metal release of 2007. Drummer **JASON RULLO** supplies this complex masterpiece with the rhythmic fuel that ignites each track with blazing intensity, spot-on technique, and thoughtful musicality. (InsideOut Music)

New Era Pt. 2: War Of The Gods represents excellent melodic prog metal from the Italian powerhouse of technically adept players known as Derdian. Drummer **SALVATORE GIORDANO** displays thunderous double bass work and excellent hand speed over this advanced musical composition. Strong vocals and interesting melodies make this a must for fans of melodic prog metal. (Magna Carta)

And Furthermore...





MARK BERMAN THE GENESIS PROJECT

A meditation on the book of Genesis in today's eco-battered world, *Project* features six vocalists negotiating daunting jazz harmonies with a kicking seven-piece band. Mark Berman shines as keyboardist, composer, and arranger, bridging jazz, R&B, and Gospel, while ace drummers **CLINT DeGANON** and **ROCKY BRYANT** deliver seamless, tight, aggressive drive and commanding pocket. (www.genesisCD.com) **Jeff Potter**

3 LEGGED DOGG FROZEN SUMMER

Big-name vets from various '80s metal bands join forces to create an impressive collection of catchy, modern FM rock tracks. Metal drumming master **VINNY APPICE** (Dio, Ozzy, Black Sabbath) lays it down hard and heavy with a powerful, relaxed groove and a huge, raw drum sound. This is radio-ready rock from seasoned metal warriors. (www.perrisrecords.com) **Mike Haid**

JAY AZZOLINA LOCAL DIALECT

On his most diverse, adventurous disc yet, jazz guitarist/composer Azzolina spans intricate, fusion-esque ear-twisters to warm acoustic charmers. Always compelling, Azzolina plays with assertiveness and complexity without shouting. Best known for his straight-ahead drumming, **GREG HUTCHINSON** delivers a startling set of funky, staccato power interplay-grooving on his tightly cranked kit. Grows with each listen. (Garagista) **Jeff Potter**

GPS WINDOW TO THE SOUL

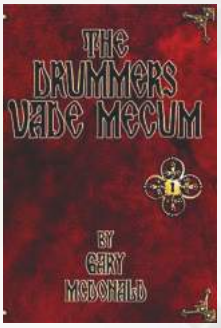
Heavily produced '80s-style progressive power pop featuring members of Asia and Spock's Beard. Drummer **JAY SCHELLEN** (Asia) displays supreme groove and impressive control over complex arrangements. Picture Asia on steroids with Ronnie James Dio on vocals, and you've got a good snapshot of GPS. (InsideOut) **Mike Haid**

MULTI-MEDIA

THE DRUMMERS VADE MECUM
BY GARY MCDONALD

BOOK/CD LEVEL: ALL $39.95

★★★☆☆

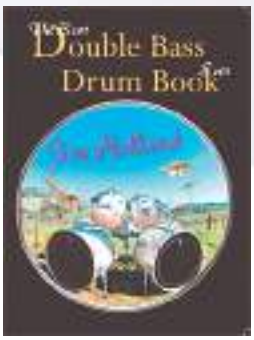


Carrying around too many drum books? Australian instructor Gary McDonald's intention for *The Drummers Vade Mecum* (Latin for "reference book") was to distill a library of drumming texts into one source. At 248 pages, the book is a bit unwieldy. But it does manage to coalesce various concepts like sticking exercises, shuffles, linear rock, double bass, Latin grooves, odd times, and press rolls for convenient accessibility. Minor misstep: The included CD's cheap-sounding electronic drums might distract beginners. (www.myspace.com/thedrummersvademecum) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

THE BEST DOUBLE BASS DRUM BOOK EVER
BY JIM HOLLAND

BOOK/2 CDs LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED $24.95

★★★★☆

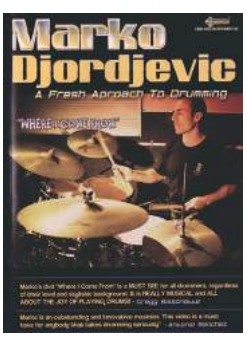


California-based drum instructor Jim Holland's epic new tome *The Best Double Bass Drum Book Ever* may in fact be just that. The 616 patterns here range from relatively simple 16th notes to mind-bending triplet fills with rests on the downbeat, leaving any player inspired with new ideas. The sheer number of transcriptions is exhaustive and will benefit anyone looking to expand his double bass vocabulary—especially aspiring metal drummers who want to delve into the playing of masters like Charlie Benante or Mike Portnoy. (www.jimholland.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

MARKO DJORDJEVIC
WHERE I COME FROM:
A FRESH APPROACH TO DRUMMING

DVD LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED $30

★★★☆☆



World-class drummer Marko Djordjevic's articulate and soft-spoken approach to dissecting his original instrumental world/jazz compositions is intimate, sincere, and educational. The low-budget production is easily forgiven, given the high quality of information and the outstanding performances by Djordjevic and bassist Janek Gwizdala. Djordjevic also covers topics like proper posture, hand and foot techniques, odd meters, and metric modulation. This well-organized production features written examples from various musical performances and includes several inspiring performance clips. There is much to be learned when this DVD is properly digested. (www.myspace.com/svetimarko) **Mike Haid**

THOMAS LANG
CREATIVE CONTROL

BOOK/CD LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED $24.95

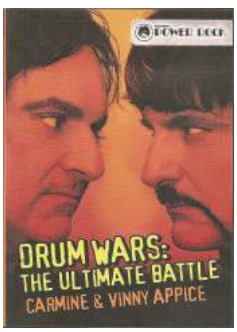
★★★☆☆

Creative Control is the type of advanced instructional that tests our will to push our physical and mental drumming abilities to the absolute maximum breaking point. The first half of the book focuses on Lang's demanding practice exercises. These feature challenging rudimental patterns designed to condition the hands and feet for the extreme interdependence workouts typical of his playing. There are also multi-pedal orchestrations and Sonor Giant Step Twin Effect Pedal exercises. Part Two features five drum charts from original compositions also found on the accompanying play-along CD (with and without drums), taken from the drummer's 2004 DVD release of the same name. Lang explains the origins and structure of each track with helpful hints to master these complex creations. (Hudson Music) **Mike Haid**

CARMINE & VINNY APPICE
DRUM WARS: THE ULTIMATE BATTLE

DVD LEVEL: ALL $17.99

★★★☆☆



In perhaps the greatest mockumentary since *This Is Spinal Tap*, the brothers Appice challenge each other to a no-holds-barred drum battle for the right to pronounce the family name, loser be damned. Carmine (Vanilla Fudge, Rod Stewart, Cactus) and Vinny (Black Sabbath, Dio) play similarly primitive (by today's standards) rock 'n' roll drum styles, as witnessed by their duet on "The Ocean" (joined by Alphonso Johnson and Jennifer Batten). The Appices also trade fours and perform some blistering solos. Through archival footage and extensive interviews, all is revealed—maybe too much. (MVD) **Ken Micallef**

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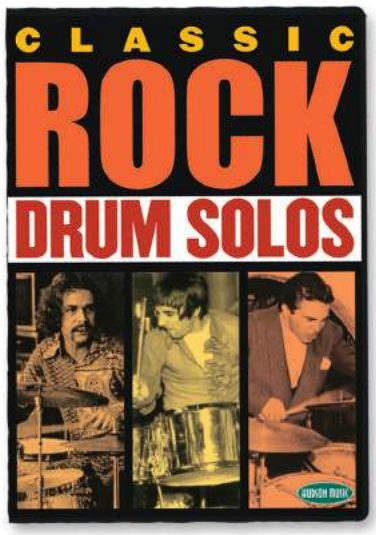

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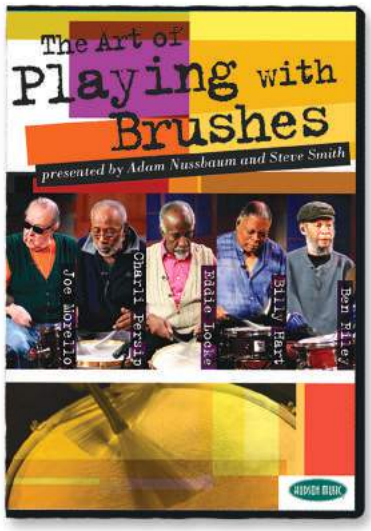
Modern Drummer Festival 2006
12 Hours 50 Minutes • 4 Discs

Performances and interviews from the 2-Day 2006 Modern Drummer Festival with Stewart Copeland, Steve Smith, Thomas Lang, Luis Conté, Danny Seraphine, Glenn Kotche, Mike Mangini, Teddy Campbell, Gerald Heyward, Aaron Spears, Marvin McQuitty, Bobby Sanabria, Jason McGerr, Brann Dailor, Ronald Bruner, Jr. and Dave DiCenso.



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Video Trailer

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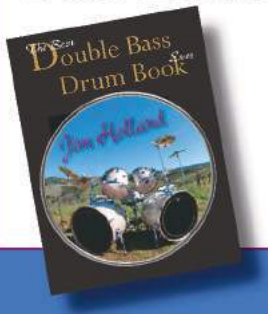

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The Ludwig Book! by Rob Cook. Business history and dating guide, 300 pages (64 color), Wm. F. Ludwig II autobiography, books on Rogers, Leedy, Slingerland, calfskin heads, gut snares, and more. Contact Rebeats, tel: (989) 463-4757, Rob@rebeats.com, Web site: www.rebeats.com.

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Connecticut **Vintage** And Custom **Drum Show**, April 20, 2008, Newington, CT. 30 exhibitors, consignments, door prizes, and live clinics. Contact Rick Smith, (860) 523-1850. **Ctdrumshow@aol.com. Www.ctdrumshow.com.**

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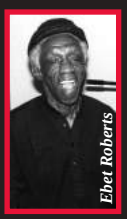

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KoSA Cuba Workshops

Many of the KoSA classes were held on the beach, with views like this one.

Cuban drum legend Giraldo Piloto has been a key figure in KoSA Cuba workshops since their inception.

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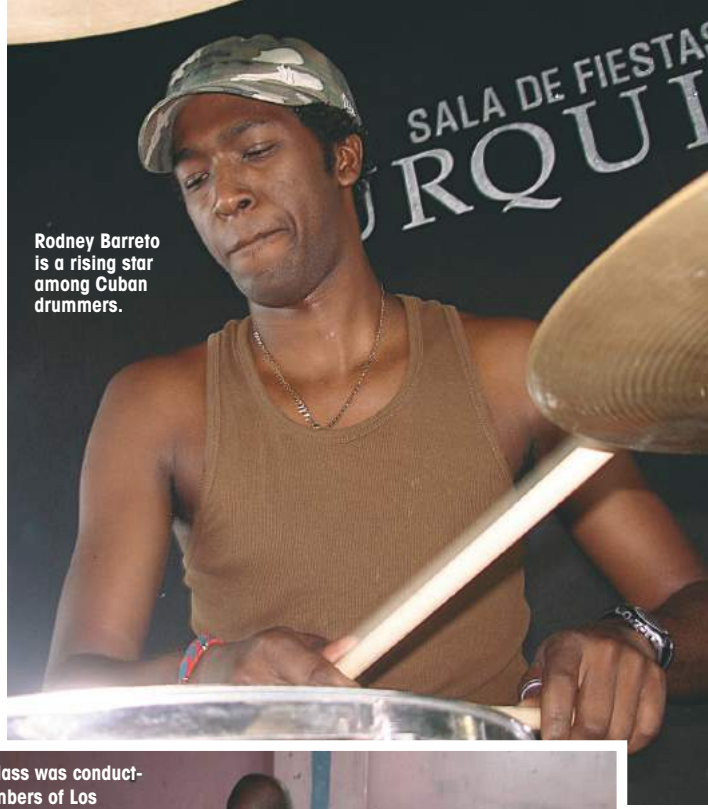
The sixth edition of the KoSA Cuba Workshops, held this past October 21 through 28, offered participants an opportunity to discover the rhythms and culture of the Cuban province of Matanzas. The week-long event included intimate hands-on classes with Cuban greats, including drumset artists **Giraldo Piloto** (Klimax), **El Peje** (Chucho Valdez), **Miguelon Rodriguez** (Mestizaje), and rising Cuban star **Rodney Barreto**. Conga artists **Julio Lopez Sanchez** (Klimax), **Forbès** (Mestizaje), and **Jesú s** and **Freddy** (Los Moniquitos de Matanzas) left a lasting impression on the participants. Timbale specialist **Amadito Valdez** (of the famed Buena Vista Social Club) gave a presentation on the evolution of drums and rhythms in Cuba. KoSA Cuba participants also had the chance to go to Havana to continue classes there.

While n the province of Matanzas, participants enjoyed staying at a four-star hotel and listening to evening performances by Giraldo Piloto' s dazzling ensemble Klimax. Another highlight was a two-day residency at the studio of famed group Los Moniquitos de Matanzas.

Plans are under way for the 2008 workshops, to be held at the end of October. The event will be open to the international community and will be held in collaboration with the Havana International Drum Festival. For more information about the Havana Drum Festival, the KoSA Cuba Workshops, and all other KoSA activities, visit www.kosamusic.com.



Rodney Barreto is a rising star among Cuban drummers.

Miguelon Rodriguez taught drumset, congas, and timbales.

A conga class was conducted by members of Los Moniquitos de Matanzas.

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Station Nightclub Relief Concert

Troy Luccketta performed with Tesla at the Station Relief Fund Charity Concert on February 25. Troy was also an organizer of the event.

The Fifth Anniversary Relief Fund Charity Concert was held this past February 25, at Dunkin' Donuts Center in Providence, Rhode Island. The event marks the fifth anniversary of the Station nightclub fire in Rhode Island. That tragedy took the lives of one hundred people, injured two hundred others, and cost sixty-five children one or both of their parents. Five years later, funds available for fire survivors are woefully inadequate. Only fifteen survivors qualified for social security benefits, and many are still unable to meet their monthly needs.

The event was organized by The Station Family Fund, which was founded by survivors, family members, and community members affected by the fire, and by the Wake Up To Love Foundation, founded by Tesla drummer **Troy Luccketta**. All proceeds from ticket sales and charity auctions will benefit The Station Family Fund, a non-profit 501 (c)(3) charitable organization committed to providing survivor relief, including costs of ongoing treatment and rehabilitation.

Relief Concert artists included **Carmine Appice**' s SLAM, Chicago drummer **Danny Seraphine**, Tesla, Twisted Sister, Stryper, Tom Scholz (Boston), Aaron Lewis (Staind), Kevin Max (DC Talk), Eric Martin, and Gary Hoey. Information on the Station Family Fund is available at www.stationfamilyfund.org. Information on Troy Luccketta' s Wake Up To Love Foundation is available at www.wakeuptolove.com.

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Mark Hudson (Grammy Award winning Writer/Producer, Aerosmith) ★ **Kip Winger** (Winger)
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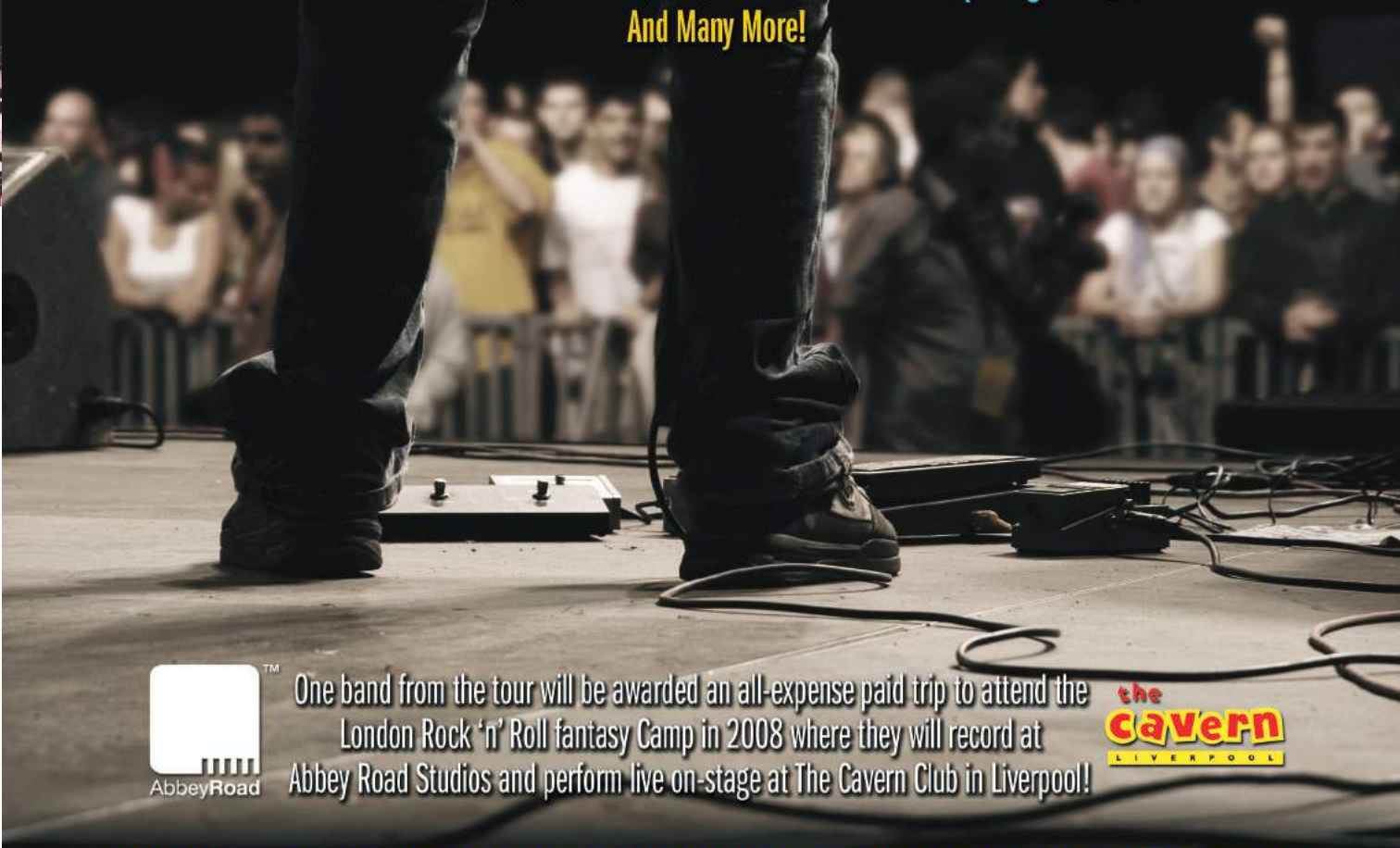

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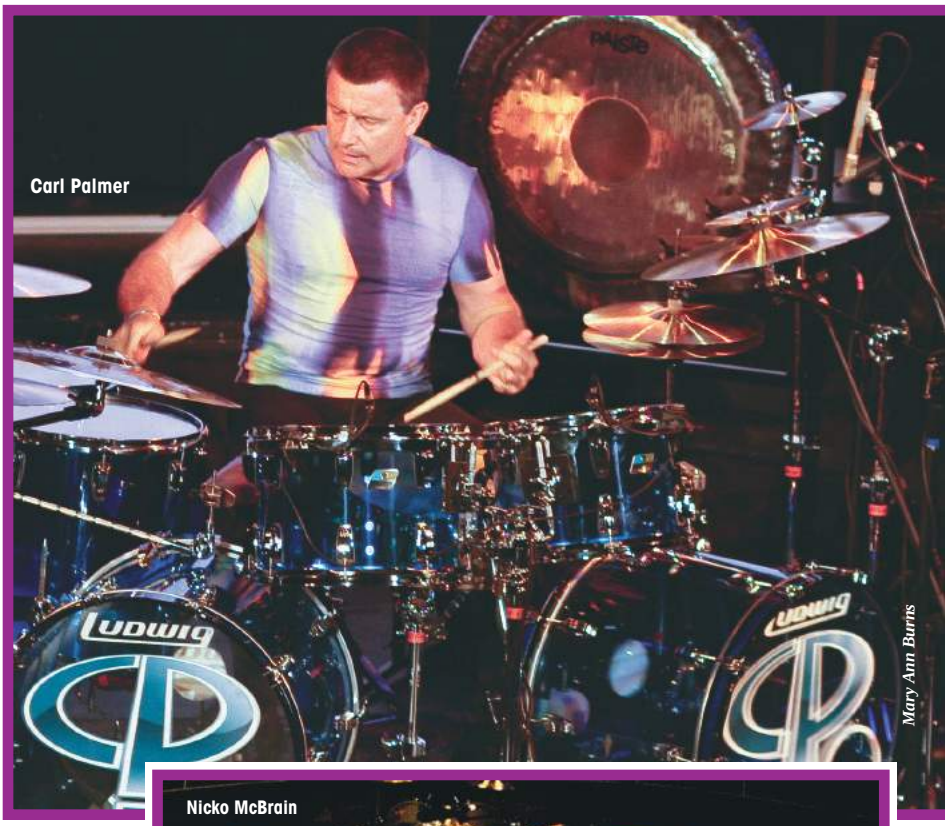


Ludwig has added prog-rock legend **Carl Palmer** (Asia, ELP) to their artist roster.

Now playing Vic Firth drumsticks are **Nicko McBrain** (Iron Maiden), **Kevin Ricard** (American Idol), **Longineu Parsons III** (Yellowcard), **Spider Dubose** (Sly & The Family Stone), **Daniel Williams** (Devil Wears Prada), and **Mavrico Herrera** (Yerba Buena).

Aaron Comess (Joan Osborne, Spin Doctors) is now a Yamaha drumset artist.

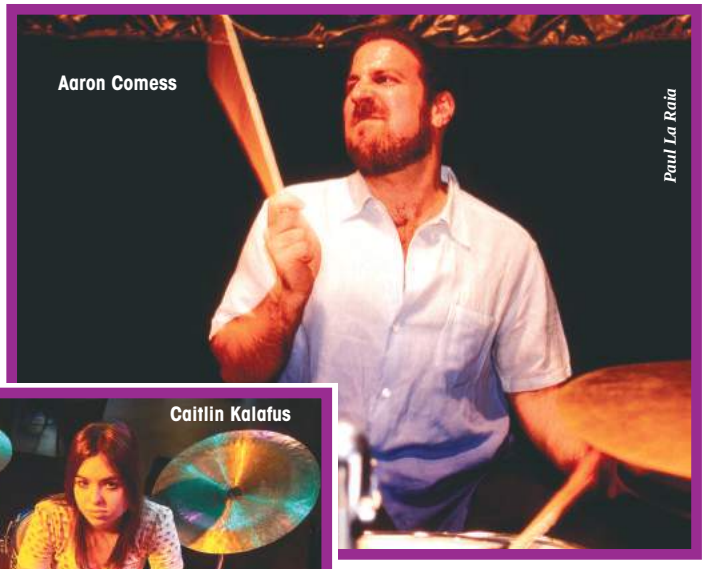
New Vater artists include **Chad Gravitt** (Best Selling Authors), **Erick Slick** (Adrian Belew), **Mikey Martin** (Shiny Toy Guns), **Eric Seats** (Soulseekers, Kelly Price), **John Spittle** (Trace Adkins), **Steve Fidyk** (Maureen McGovern), **Alice Grayson** (Wes Loper), **Jeremy Spencer** (Five Finger Death Punch), **Mike Melancon** (Emerson Drive), and **Caitlin Kalafus** (Vater Prodigy Artist).

Ray Luzier (Korn, Army Of Anyone) is playing ddrum acoustic drums.

New Pearl drummers include **Jack Irons** (Spinnerette, ex-Chili Peppers, ex-Pearl Jam), **Steven Sweet** (Warrant), **Chris Vest** (Framing Hanley), **Mac Calveres** (Cinder Road), **Brian Vodinh** (10 Years), **Brice Williams** (Lady Antebellum), and **Kitty** (Mindless Self Indulgence).

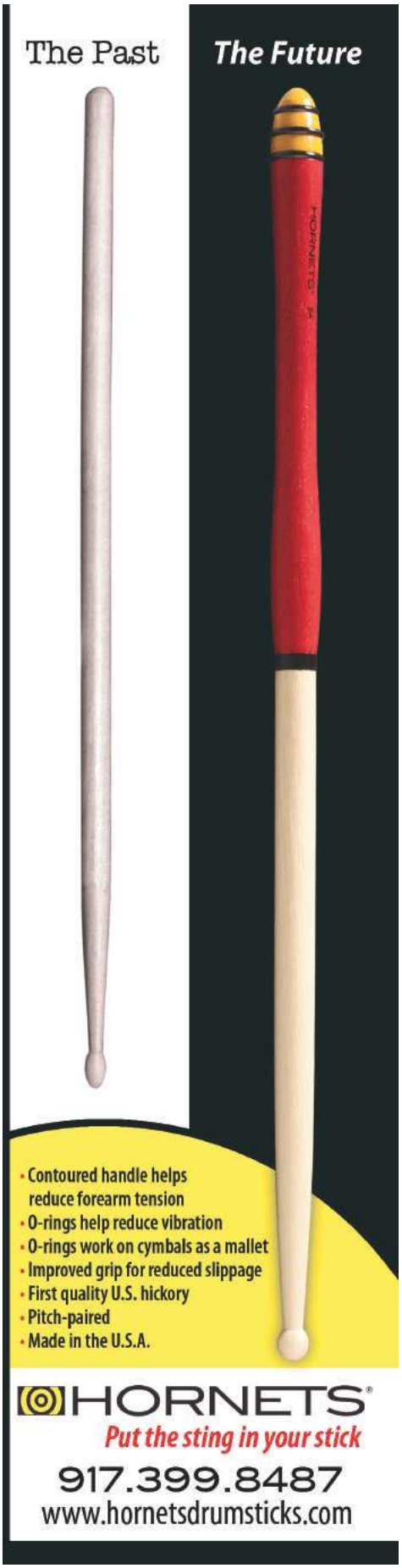
Snowy Shaw (Loud N Nasty) is playing Istanbul Mehmet cymbals.

Ray Luzier


Aaron Comess

Paul La Raia

Caitlin Kalafus



A Cozy Kit?

James McGowan of Rochester, New York owns what he believes to be a kit created for Cozy Powell. "It's an early '80s Yamaha Recording Custom kit," says James. "Cozy's personalized stickers are all over the cases. Supposedly the kit was given to Cozy's roadie, who sold it in 1983. I purchased the kit for $4,000. I added the Recording Custom snare drum later."

The kit includes 14x26 bass drums (Cozy's preferred size), 10", 12", 13", 14", and 15" double-headed rack toms, and 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms. Also included are 6" and 8" single-headed toms. According to their badges, these are Recording Custom toms, but they're fitted with Stage Custom lugs. Says James, "It looks as though Yamaha couldn't fit the long Recording Custom lugs onto the shallow drumshells, and used Stage Custom lugs instead. They never sold drums in this configuration."

All of the toms (except the 6" and 8") have solid stainless-steel single-flange rims that weigh several pounds each. Says James, "I've seen nothing like them in any store or on the Internet. They must have been custom-manufactured at a steel factory."

The bass drums originally came with heads that featured Cozy Powell's name in gothic letters. "Those went to my friend Ken Green," James laments. "He helped me get the kit and wanted them for his finders fee.

This shot shows the Recording Custom lugs (left) used on the 10" through 18" toms, and the Stage Custom lugs (right) used on the 6" and 8" toms.

The shot below shows the unusual single-flanged stainless steel rims used on all but the 6" and 8" toms.

"The kit included 700 series single-braced and 900 series double-braced stands," James continues. "The heads were the original Yamaha-logo coated white models, which I have since replaced. I've also added new Yamaha booms, DW 9000 kick pedals, and a DW 9000 hi-hat stand. Roland triggers and three Simmons SDS7 pads fire an Alesis DM5 tone generator. Cymbals include a variety of Zildjian, Paiste, and Wuhan models.

"This kit is great fun to play," James concludes. "And between its custom elements and the possibility of its having belonged to Cozy Powell, it's definitely one of a kind. But it takes up way too much room in my basement studio, so I'm thinking of selling it. Interested parties can contact me at jmcgowa1@rochester.rr.com."

Is Your Drumkit Something Special?

Of course it is! Now how about sharing your cool creation with thousands of fellow *Modern Drummer* readers. Simply send us some photos and a brief description of your unique set, and we'll consider it for inclusion in *Kit Of The Month*. And if we do pick your pride & joy for coverage in *MD*, we'll send you a cool new MD Drum Bag/Cooler—for free! Just follow the simple directions below.

Photo Requirements

1. Photos must be high-quality, sharp-focus, well-lit, and in color. High-resolution (300 dpi) digital photos are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. **2.** You may send more than one view of the kit. **3.** Show only drums, no people. **4.** Shoot drums agains a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. **5.** Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit. 6. Digital photos on disk and print photos may be sent to: Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned. **7.** Digital photos and descriptive text can also be emailed to rvh@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit Of The Month" in the subject line of the message.

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